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# THE IMPOSSIBLE ISLAND

MOUFFLON GROUND.

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*CORSICA: ITS PEOPLE AND ITS SPORT*

BY

"SNAFFLE"

AUTHOR OF "THE IMAGE OF WAR," "SYRIA" "THE ROEDEER," ETC.

*With Water-Colour Sketches by*

MISS D. FORSTER-KNIGHT

LONDON

H. F. & G. WITHERBY

326 HIGH HOLBORN, W.C.

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MANUFACTURED IN GREAT BRITAIN

DEDICATED

(By Special Permission)

To Her Imperial Majesty

THE EMPRESS OF AUSTRIA

# PREFACE

I WAS returning from one of my earlier walks—crawls would be a more exact description—round Ajaccio one day, when I was overtaken by an English couple, burdened with sketching paraphernalia, who entered into conversation with me.

He proved to be an ex-Service man of similar rank and standing to my own; and the lady was his wife.

After some talk about the place, I asked them if they were making a long stay.

"I don't quite know," replied Madame. "You see we have such a lot of luggage. We brought out all the linen, blankets, and plate for a house with the idea of settling here. But Corsica is impossible."

"Yes: Corsica is impossible," echoed the Major.

Now at that time I was aware that there was on its way to me, by *petite vitesse*, a consignment of house equipment, similar to theirs, and sent out with a like intention. Consequently their comments affected me considerably. "But, after all," I

reflected, "this is only a Britisher's opinion—the idea of people who have not our experience of living in many parts of Europe and Asia, or our adaptability to local conditions."

Which of us was right may be gathered from the following pages.

"SNAFFLE."

LLANDOGO, MONMOUTHSHIRE.

*1st March*, 1923.

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# THE IMPOSSIBLE ISLAND

## CHAPTER I

### THE JOURNEY THITHER

It was towards the end of the year 1919 that my connection with the Great War, which had been pretty continuous since 1914, came to an end by my being discharged from hospital after four and a half months of it in Damascus, Rayak, Beyrout, and Alexandria successively. Coupled with my release was the advice not to risk an English winter at once. The question for me was, whither to go? I thought of Algeria, but finally decided in favour of an island, a visit to which I had long since promised myself, Corsica.

Shortly afterwards I received an order to join, at very short notice, a steamer leaving Port Said for Europe. Now, though I was "discharged," I was miserably weak and ill; and could not look cheer-

fully forward to a hurried and roundabout railway journey through Lower Egypt. So I ventured to telegraph a request that my passage might be provided from Alexandria instead, and specifically by the S.S. *'Assaye;* and this was granted.

I had had some sort of connection with this craft, for her chief mate had been my ward-fellow at Ras-el-Tin; and, moreover, one of my fellow-patients, who had shared all my hospitals, and miserably equipped hospital-trains, was also under orders to leave by her.

The *Assaye* had at this time become pretty notorious in Egypt. She was under charter to the British Government; and employed to convey convalescent and other sick from the entire Levant to Marseilles. Passages outwards to Egypt were in those days in great demand, and of government passengers there were few. So the authorities conceived the idea of selling berths to civilians who were anxious to travel east. Fares were high; and comforts—to put it mildly—moderate; and grumbling on the part of the victims was pretty general. Finally one of them relieved his feelings by dashing into verse. Lest his lucubrations be lost to posterity, or, at best, buried in the back files of the *Egyptian Gazette*, I reproduce them here.

## THE LAY OF THE S.S. *ASSAYE*

From Marseilles' cobbled quayside
To Alexandria's bay,
We sailed one luckless morning
Aboard the old *Assaye*.
We all had first-class tickets;
The fare was twenty pounds.
Now list and we will tell you
The wonders that we found.

We wrestled on the gangway,
We wrestled on the quay,
We started after breakfast,
And got on board for tea.
They served us with a number,
And said 'twas in a ward.
We went down lots of ladders
And what we found—O Gawd!

The gleam from dingy portholes,
The musty human smell,
The dirt, the heat, the squalor,
We know them now full well.
We've learnt to steal the tumblers
From table for our teeth;
To snuggle up in blankets
And not to look beneath.

We have no room for luggage;
We have no soap to use;
One towel must last the voyage,
And no one cleans our shoes.

Three baths for five score bathers,
Stand in a soapy sea,
Four battered leaky basins
And looking-glasses three.

And when it isn't raining
We climb up overhead,
And sniff the smell of cooking,
And dread the hour for bed.
And as that hour approaches
We wonder more and more
From what disease they suffered
Who filled our bunks before.

The cockroach on the pillow,
The beetle on the floor,
The merry little fellows,
We love them more and more.
The swift elusive rodent,
The clumsy, bloated flea,
They'll really rather miss us
When next they put to sea.

We are strictly democratic
On board the old *Assaye*,
The man who never washes
Is never in the way,
The lusty Maltese friars,
Who wear their clothes in bed,
Are sleeping next the Colonel
At twenty pounds a head.

We don't complain of friars,
Or Gippos, strange to say,
But some who pulled the wires
Have shown a better way.

I don't know how they did it,
But this I know full well:
That they have got deck cabins,
And we are down in L.

From Marseilles' cobbled quayside
To Alexandria's bay,
We ate and slept and wallowed
On board the old *Assaye*.
You mustn't think we're grousing,
We have enjoyed it so,
But someone's profiteering,
P'raps not the P. & O.

Our voyage, if cold, was calm and uneventful. I was glad to pass the Straits of Messina by daylight, as this was new ground to me. We had a capital view of the old castle of Scylla, the scene of a gallant defence by British troops before they were finally driven out of continental Italy over a century before; and we revived the old joke against our journalists, guilty of describing the force dispatched after Caporetto as "the first British army ever to go to Italy." (Regiments who bear the word "Maida" on their colours, please note.)

It was falling dark as we reached Stromboli, where it suddenly struck me that, in all my wanderings, I had never seen an active volcano before. Active it certainly was, though not violently so; but masses of molten lava were rolling down its northern slope, and

occasionally reaching the sea, which threw up clouds of steam as it received them.

Next morning found the high cliffs of Sardinia in sight; and as the day wore on I had my first sight of Corsica. Forbidding and wintry it looked, its hills—the Incudine, near by which I was to dwell later on, the most prominent—being all deep in snow. A bitter wind blew from them to us; and soon sent everybody below.

"There's your future residence," said our Captain to me a few hours later, pointing to a light twinkling through the darkness. "That's the Sanguinaires light, at the entrance of the Gulf of Ajaccio."

Though I had thus arrived at Corsica I had to put the best part of a week in at Marseilles before I could actually get there, by one of the comfortless Fraissinet boats. This line forms a most apposite introduction to the impossible island they serve. They always arrive in Corsica very early in the morning, so that the traveller naturally supposes that he will be able to break his fast before he lands. *Nenni*, not as much as a cup of coffee is available. Indeed, it is not to be had at later hours—not even, always, by the captain of the ship himself. (Fact.)

Why the stewards and stewardess of the boat should wait on passengers with outstretched palms at

their departure it is hard to understand, as they never do the slightest thing for one; and stand by watching whilst one struggles down to the cabin with one's hand luggage. Once only did I think I had detected one in an act of civility. It was on a passage from Nice to Bastia that he came up to me and asked me if I would like a deck-chair. "Very much," I replied; and he fetched me one. Shortly afterwards he approached me with a neat printed receipt—for three francs, for the use of the same.

The boats in themselves are not so bad (common rumour calls them verminous, but I have not found them so). Unfortunately they get a ludicrously small amount of cargo; and consequently roll abominably in a beam sea. They are manned and officered mostly by Corsicans—good seamen, too, for the coasts are dangerous, the harbours indifferent, and the passage, in winter at any rate, usually rough.

One's arrival in Corsica is characteristic. If you have not been smart enough to have your baggage stowed on deck, whence it is very often stolen, you will have to wait several hours to get it, as it is usually ingeniously stowed below a lot of other cargo. Mine, on this occasion, was limited to my cabin possessions, so I walked off along the pitch-dark

streets in charge of the hotel-porter, to reach a hall lighted only by a couple of guttering candles.

"No: the gas is not on in the mornings," said the clerk. "Moreover, the house is full."

This was cheerful.

"You must wait for a room till the travellers get up for the morning train, which won't be very long. No; there is no coffee. It will be ready presently." Such was my welcome to Corsica.

Ajaccio is certainly an impossible capital. All that can be said of it is that it is a place of great natural beauty, albeit rather suggestive of a drop-scene. The walk or drive along the northern shore of the Gulf would be delightful, if some miles of it were not unfortunately given up to cemeteries. In addition to the large municipal one there are scores of private ones all along this road. Even in death the Corsican cannot rest comfortably beside his hereditary enemy, but must have his own walled-in, and generally roofed, enclosure. Every decent family has one; and the most pleasant part of Ajaccio is entirely given up to these.

However, a funeral is not a dismal affair here. From the house the coffin is taken to the church—generally the Cathedral—and thence escorted in a walking procession to the road adjoining the Bona-

parte family memorial. There a number of cabs—it is a point of honour to hire as many as possible; and indeed, the extortionate "cabbies" of the place derive their principal income from the dead—is drawn up. Into these get not only the friends of the deceased, but every loafer who wants an airing, and not always without putting out his pipe. The first cab contains the priest and two acolytes, behind whom comes the hearse.

When all the cabs are packed it is "*Fouette, cocher*," and away the whole procession goes, hell-for-leather, to the cemetery. The hearse-driver of Ajaccio is a quaint hunch-back, and I have seen him, on occasion, take a small child with him on the box-seat, for a treat! I had the opportunity of seeing many of these funerals, for the cemetery road is the only level one on this side of the town; and in those days it was my principal occupation to test my gradually returning strength in walks, which began by averaging a kilometre or two with frequent rests, and gradually increased till I could manage to reach the fine pine-woods of the Scudo, seven kilometres away, and come back without sitting down at all. I, at least, have some reason for a grateful memory of the Corsican capital.

To return to it. The town is not too well supplied

with water, and bad water at that. It has no electric light; and at the time I speak of the streets were not lighted at all. The shops closed early; and after that the darkness was Cimmerian. To be sure, the light of the shop-windows made little difference, for the gas was so bad that purchasers had to carry the goods right up to the gas-jet in order to see them at all. Still, the glimmer made it possible to get along the streets until six o'clock or so, in spite of the many obstacles with which they abound.

There is a theatre in Ajaccio—a mournful-looking building with shattered windows. I never knew it open; indeed, there was not even a cinematograph in the place—only two dubious *cafés chantants*.

Nor were there any out-of-door amusements in the place. A long drive enabled one to reach a little fishing and some snipe-shooting—neither worth the expense involved. The boatmen of the place were so extortionate that sea-fishing was practically only carried on from the shore; and with moderate results.

The upshot of all this was that everybody embraced art. As a lady said to me some years later: "Everybody sketches at Ajaccio: there is nothing else to do."

Perhaps this is one reason for the state of things

described in a letter which reached me this very day (16th January, 1923); and which says:

"There are but very few visitors at Ajaccio this winter. The hotels are almost empty; and they are complaining of the bad season. The weather is very fine indeed, etc."

Another reason lies in the ridiculous charges made to visitors, considerably higher than those of the Riviera, but of this more anon.

Apart from sketching, then, there is nothing to do in Ajaccio, but to take walks, but it must be admitted that the walks round the town are generally delightful, and command continual views of great loveliness. Some of the roads—those made by German prisoners of war—are unfinished, for carriage traffic, that is, but present no difficulty to the active pedestrian. Some pleasant walks on the north-east side of the town are attainable by walking on the aqueducts which bring in the town water; but this is a route which needs a strong head, for with the exception of the highest, they have no railing; and the footway is but a cubit wide. The water runs in an open conduit; and often contains fragments of clothing, old boots, and other sundries. Indeed, I am much mistaken if I have not detected clothes being washed in it, but it looked as though

these were promptly whisked out of sight on my approach being perceived.

Almost every year sees English people settling in Ajaccio, renting villas, or buying houses and olive groves. But very few years see them gone again; there are no permanent colonists such as we find on the French littoral—not even such as come every winter.

A few days after my own arrival there I set about finding an abode for myself, only to be told, "It is impossible to find an *appartement* in the town." But luck stood my friend, and I was able to secure a small flat in the Casa Peraldi, one of the few houses in the capital which has water laid on. Our windows looked on a charming garden and the sea beyond, but the kitchen faced the fetid Rue des Ecoles—one of the smelliest of the many smelly thoroughfares of the place. By the way, it was not, strictly speaking, a thoroughfare, for it ended in a ramp, impassable to wheeled traffic, and leading up to the citadel.

I have not alluded to the smells of Ajaccio, but they are pretty bad. The sewers run under the streets, to which they have untrapped exits; and the sewage only shifts seawards after heavy rain. However, those who are acquainted with the frightful

searches of Corté, think Ajaccio smells quite bearable. And it must be admitted that this capital of a French Department compares unfavourably, for cleanliness, with Damascus, just as the Corsican villages lose by comparison with those of Syria.

To return to our flat. The garden contained many flowers, various palms, and one blackbird. He, however, disappeared—no doubt he was shot. *Pâté de merles* is the delicacy of Ajaccio (I confess I did not appreciate it); and of the seventy tons of "game" annually shipped from Corsica blackbirds form no small proportion.

It will, therefore, be understood that the *fauna* of the place do not add much interest to one's walks in the district. Buzzards are about the commonest of the larger birds, but if handsome on the wing they are ignoble when collecting beetles, or lizards, on the ground. There are also some ravens, and occasional blue-rocks from the sea-cliffs. I have seen a sparrow-hawk swoop at these; and, indeed, at the buzzards too, but the latter was only a half-hearted attack.

Game is almost non-existent. Although I had a couple of good and keen dogs with me I only saw one partridge—a red-leg, of course—one woodcock, and one hare during a five months' stay, though the

gun is not quite so much in evidence in the Ajaccio district as it is in most parts of Corsica.

In spring some cuckoos arrived; and a fair number of quails.

# CHAPTER II

## THE CAPITAL AND BEYOND

THE early days of my sojourn in Ajaccio coincided with those of a general election—for the lower House. It did not appear, however, to be provocative of any very great excitement, though the street outside the Prefecture was crowded all day long. There was less interest taken in this contest than in a later one for Senators, at which, however, only *Conseillers Général* vote, or did it seem so to us, in the mountains at that time? There is no possible doubt that much more enthusiasm was brought to bear on an election to the *Conseil Général* itself, which we suffered later on at Ile Rousse, where the partisans of the rival candidates kept us awake night after night with their brayings and their (blank) gun and revolver fusillades.

It is the fact that the less important—politically speaking—the election the greater the excitement, which culminates in a struggle for the Mayoralty of

a village. The reason is obvious; everybody has, or hopes, to get something out of the future Mayor. Corsican elections are hopelessly corrupt; let me quote a case within my knowledge. A wealthy Brazilian lady married an islander of no particular family or position. A few months later she literally purchased for him the position of *Conseiller Général* for a place some seventy miles from his house, and with which he had had no previous connection whatever!

To return to the contest at Ajaccio. Elections for deputy leave the ordinary voter cold, because, except in the case of the few who are promised sinecures—most Government appointments in Corsica are such; or are so treated—there is nothing to be got out of them. All the candidates promise *monts et merveilles;* and go off to France and forget all about "the most beautiful island in the world," as one poster modestly styles it.

To Englishmen French politics are mostly incomprehensible; and Corsican ones consequently even more so. One thing is, however, noteworthy, and that is, that it is years since any Bonapartist deputy has been returned for the island; and that not even a candidate of that way of thinking now comes forward. There was an immensity of enthusiasm on

the occasion of the Napoleonic centenary in 1921; but it was purely sentimental.

Amongst the successful candidates at the election I speak of was M. Landry—then Minister of Marine; and a man who might have done something for Corsica if he had not fallen a victim to one of the frequent French changes of Ministry shortly afterwards. But, after all, what can be done for a country which does nothing for itself? This is the text on which the President of the Republic preached to the Corsicans in 1922; and they didn't like it at all.

Amongst English people acquainted with Corsica Ajaccio is usually spoken of as a healthy place—in winter that is. Relatively it is so, but I very much doubt if any locality in the low-country can be justly so described. It is true that Ajaccio is free from malaria, except on the outskirts. Malta fever also does not obtain there, as cows' milk is generally available. It is the use of goats' milk that causes this complaint.

On the other hand consumption is frightfully prevalent in the Corsican capital. Only Propriano has a higher percentage of cases to population; and this should give pause to parents proposing to take children there for the winter.

I am driven to the conclusion that all the low-

country of the island is unhealthy, though, of course, less so in winter than in summer. Recent examinations of children proved that all, with the exception of four per cent, had their spleens affected as a result of malaria. The hill villagers may be called healthier; but it must be remembered that, firstly, most hill villages are, so to say, affiliated to another on the plain, where the people stay too late in spring, and to which they go down to gather their grapes and so on; and that, secondly, a large proportion of the hill-men are tempted by the good wages of the corn-harvest to go down to the plain for weeks at a very unhealthy time of year. The bulk of these men suffer from malaria.

When I had been six weeks in Ajaccio my wife joined me, coming overland from England with the junior members of the expedition.

The weather throughout the island was unusual that year, as the spring rains failed completely; and quite early in May we began to feel the desirability of moving to a higher level.

The question was, "Where to go?"

It had always been our way rather to avoid the beaten track, and to this custom we proposed to adhere.

Corsica, like Cæsar's Gaul, may be divided into

three parts. Firstly, there are the coastal towns, fairly well known to the tourist, and possessing a certain, if not very exalted, standard of civilisation. Secondly, there are various parts of the hill country, accessible by the railway, or by good motor roads, and having some comfortable, and some fair inns, to which the visitor to the littoral also resorts. Thirdly there is the wild and slightly populated country of the mountain, the forest, the *maquis*, and the malarial plain of the east coast. These last may fairly be called "Wild Corsica." It is true that roads, wonderfully good, all things considered, traverse much of this, and the motor-car is not an unfamiliar object on many of them. It goes without saying, however, that the bulk of the hill-country is not touched by those who traverse it in this fashion.

"Why write on Corsica?" I was asked. "There are so many books on it already." There are. I believe the total number reaches three figures. Many of them I have read; but with the sole exception of one chapter on mountaineering I failed to find one that told me what I wanted to know; and it is in the hope that there are others in like case that I have penned these pages.

It is true there is a book on the Corsican *maquis*. But the author writes of the hills within a walk of

the capital, and that was by no means what I wanted. Indeed I covered all his ground as an invalid. He was a botanist, and as such his description is excellent; but when he ventures on the *fauna* he is quite at sea. Yet wild boar come very nearly, if not quite, as close to Ajaccio as the hills he wrote of. I was asked to join a shooting party which was going to the Scudo, a short walk from the town. When, however, I heard they had located a sow with a litter, I made my health an excuse for not going.

I have referred briefly to the junior members of the expedition. Alas! in the early days of May their number was reduced by one. "Colleen," my wife's favourite, smooth badger-hound, which had never been separated from her a single hour for nearly eleven years, died after only four days' illness; and lies buried in the Peraldi gardens at Ajaccio.

So it was sadly that we made our preparations for leaving the capital.

May proved very hot and dry; but we saw most of it out, leaving Ajaccio on the 28th of that month by steamer for the little port of Propriano, where we dined and slept. This is quite a modern place, and has grown up in recent years to deal with the trade —largely of charcoal, timber and briar-root—of the hill country behind it.

Next morning we started off after breakfast. Our drive, which would have been more pleasant had it not been for the heat and dust, followed the valley of the Rizzanése, and ran over the Forcina pass, which is not a very high one. Then, all at once we left the river, and mounted steeply to St. Lucia di Tallano. This is one of the most picturesque villages in the district, and the arrangement of its houses points to the existence, at some time, of a castle here. Be this as it may, it still possesses a fine old convent, in the church of which are some interesting tombs and stone carvings. It also has a quarry of wonderful marble, the markings of which resemble those of a leopard skin.

Corsica is fairly provided with marble, but none of the quarries are worked nowadays—never have, indeed, been seriously worked, though some of them are capable of producing a very fine quality of stone. Ask a Corsican why, and he will tell you " shortage of labour," as if any and every village you enter does not show you a score of men, mostly young, lounging and gossiping all day long in the street.

Moreover, labour can generally be freely, easily and inexpensively drawn from continental Italy and Sardinia. Experience proves, however, that con-

tracts with such men are nugatory. After all, life is sweet; and when your Appenine labourers are told that they must stand for Corsican rates of pay, preposterous as these are, or look out for a bullet in the back, it is small wonder that they break their agreement, and slink off to the next steamer home. The humour of the situation lies in the fact that they are not "black-legging" the Corsicans, who have not the slightest intention of taking on any such job. You can get work out of Corsicans, in the forests, which are congenial to them, especially if they can be their own masters by taking small contracts for felling and hauling timber. But quarrying or mining is uncongenial to them. Moreover, did they not vote for So-and-so at the last election, and was he not successful? It is therefore only necessary to wait till the promised job as *douanier* or *cantonnier* comes along, and then they can do nothing for ever and ever.

Meanwhile there are the chestnuts from the two or three ancestral trees to be collected—the women do that, of course; but the proud *proprietaire* will supervise the drying house. Or, at another season, there are the shoots on the vines planted by our grandsires to be trimmed off. Clearing the soil of the little vineyard is rather too laborious, so it very

often doesn't get done. Or perhaps we hire one of the lowest of the low—a mere day-labourer—to do it. In this case we camp out in the vineyard ourselves all day to see that we get our money's worth. All the same we grudge the money; what are women for? It surely can't take all day to carry down the firewood to bake the bread, to do the washing, to milk the goat, to go half a mile for every drop of water, to clean the house (but that they don't do), to feed the pig and the fowls, and to make a few lire by carrying traveller's luggage to the hotels. Which, naturally, no proud Corsican would think of doing, though he will thank you for twopence if he takes the trouble to *find* a woman who will carry your suitcase on her head.

Apart from the labour trouble, comes the difficulty of getting a good title to property. "Continentals" are not likely to invest money in a marble quarry, or any other sort of industrial enterprise, unless that question is capable of definite settlement. In Corsica it hardly ever is. If you have successfully, and successively, dealt with half a dozen "proprietors" you may be certain that at the last moment a seventh will pop up, with perfectly well-founded claims, all of which have to be gone into and paid for.

Example is better than precept. I was offered a mine—antimony I think it was—quite a good mine for Corsica, where the ore is apt to run out as the miner gets down lower. That sort of thing not being in my line I passed the offer on to a London friend.

"Certainly," was the reply, "I can do with it, if it's a sound proposition. Get me an option on it, at an agreed price, and I'll run out and inspect it, and give a definite answer at once."

Well, I wrote for that option. That is now about three years ago; and I am still waiting for it, though of course I received a civil reply that I should have it without delay. Moreover, that mine belonged, and still belongs, to *business men*—Bastia shopkeepers. I was about to write that in the case of peasant owners it would be far worse, but how could it be worse?

What is actually worse, is to deal with a *Commune*, where the signature, or mark, of every man of the parish is necessary to a transfer of land. As some of them are sure to be at Buenos Ayres, on the Yellow River, or at Timbuctoo, all you can do is to back your luck. They may never come back, but if they do you will find them expensive to deal with—perhaps not to be dealt with at all.

I have referred to mines. Corsica produces most metals, except (*pace* Mr Seton Merriman) gold. As I said above, the veins have a bad habit of "petering" out as they descend, for which reason, and on account of the difficulties to which I have already referred, the industry has never prospered. Still there are mines, which sufficiently capitalised and economically worked, should pay well enough; *would* pay well enough if they were only across the Straits in Sardinia.

In the same way Corsica is extraordinarily rich in mineral springs. A few have been spasmodically exploited. The Water of Orezza is to be bought in Corsican towns; and there are to my knowledge something like ten inland watering places, in one or other of which waters good for almost every possible complaint can be found. Some of these have *établissements* of pretensions, others not even a wooden booth to save the bathers' modesty. Notably there is a spring which appears to be of great therapeutic value, which may have a name, but I have never heard it. It lies between Serra and Travo, and is frequented in spring by peasants of the district for no other purpose than to drink the water. They also load barrels of it on mules and donkeys, and hawk it about, but only in a very

limited radius. In any other country it would be systematically exploited. It is pretty certain that nothing can be done with it. That there is no road to it is a matter of fairly easy adjustment; but it is sure to belong to at least a dozen owners, who derive no profit out of it whatever at present, but who none the less will never combine to convey a good title to one who could bring it to profit and use to the country.

To return to Tallano, which, by the way, has one of these mineral springs near it. For our purposes, on this day, it was more to the point that it also possessed an inn; and we stopped to rest our ponies and lunch. The well-known Tallano wine is grown in this district.

In the afternoon we followed a still steeply rising road, along the shelf of Aja Vignarsa. From this height—some 2,800 feet—we had a magnificent view; and thence our road descended to a long straggling village; and then rose again, running through magnificent chestnut woods, to San Gavino; and beyond, only to fall again to the bridge over the Zonza torrent. The gorge through which the stream runs is quite Alpine in character; but owing to the drought the river was low, though still well-stocked with trout. From the bridge the road ascends a

couple of hundred feet to Zonza, our summer head-quarters.

This village, which lies at an elevation of 2,600 feet, is not in itself picturesque; but the views from it are very fine. To the north the celebrated aiguilles of Bavella rise up against the sky like a Brobdingnagian cockscomb, and to the west range above range of fir-clad hills extend, to the Serra di Scopamene; and to the north-west the Incudine (nearly 6,000 feet) towers above its brethren.

To the south the *Pinsalone* hides the higher Monte Calva beyond; in fact all the highest mountains are invisible, except those I have named.

Zonza is a curious place. It forms an immense parish (*commune*) extending to the sea; and the population is largely migratory, living in winter down at Sainte Lucie di Porte Vecchio; and going to Zonza in summer when the low country is feverish. It lies amidst a huge agglomeration of weather-worn granite boulders and fine chestnut trees. Some of these (pollards) are of enormous girth and great age. One, which I measured, was forty-seven feet in circumference at five feet from the ground, and this was by no means the largest hereabouts. One hardly requires to be told that it is celebrated for its hams and sausages, for the four-footed providers of

these luxuries are everywhere; and there is something very Irish about the way they wander in and out of the houses. Partly on their account, and partly on that of their wilder brothers, the cultivated ground, and even the meadows, are very strongly fenced, but both inside and outside of the fences bracken grows luxuriantly, and is wasted, not being cut for bedding for stock. A short walk on any of the four roads leading out of the village brings one into high pine woods, in all of which saw-mills are at work.

At the moment Government was paying a reward of fifty francs for the destruction of each wild boar (in theory, that is; for the funds allocated to this purpose have long since been exhausted), these having increased beyond measure during the War. We had ocular proof of this on our first day, for one was shot close to the village, and we had some of him for dinner. Of course, they are not very good eating in summer; but they are outlaws whom it is legitimate to shoot all the year round. It is, however, a regrettable fact that the game laws are a dead-letter in these wilder parts of Corsica. An engineer whom I met at dinner at this time, and who had a saw-mill in the small forest of Albarello, near the sea, told me his workmen had recently killed eight moufflon there; and yet the Government is by

CORSICAN WILD PIG.

way of protecting these animals, as well as the red deer. Of course, at this time the lambs are quite small; and it is a regular business to catch them.

On the following Sunday the same lot of sportsmen missed a boar; and after that I heard nothing of any for a long time. No doubt as the flocks came up to the hills the game went down for peace and quiet.

To a certain extent the wild and tame pigs frequent the same ground, and the latter are unmistakably cross-bred. At Zonza there were several specimens which seemed to be three-quarter bred, and a number which were obviously half-bred. Thus, the straight face, which is so marked a characteristic of the wild boar, occurred with some of them, and the more general appearance and long hair with quite a number. Moreover, I noticed one, in each of two litters of domestic pig, which was striped like a young wild boar.

As to the opposite cross—that of the domestic pig with the wild boar—opinions differ; but I think that such a cross does occur, at times. Some scientists have attempted to set up two races of wild boar in Corsica. One, the smaller, is said to be identical with the fossil pig, and the other to have been intro-

duced. I should rather say that the smaller is the true wild-boar of the country, and the larger the result of crosses with the domestic pigs, which seem to be of various breeds, and have no doubt all been introduced at various periods.

# CHAPTER III

## THE BANDITS

We had been only a very short time at Zonza when the weather broke. We were as glad as the natives to see the rain, for though we had not, like them, gardens and vineyards, we preferred to have the roads free from dust and the air cooler. Unfortunately it did not last long.

Life in a Corsican village is primitive, in fact most people will say impossible. Our arrangement was to go to the local hotel for our meals, and at its round table we had opportunities of learning to know some Corsican characters. Mine host of the hotel (I am afraid his share of the management was confined to walking about the dining-room with his pipe in his mouth) was perhaps as great a character as any we met. There was something absurdly familiar about him, which puzzled me for the first week. Then I learnt that his name was Aulery; and I was told the name was unknown elsewhere in the island. "*Aulery! Aulery!*" I turned it over in my mind till inspira-

tion came like a flash. "O'Leary!" Now I knew what was familiar to one who had served for years in an Irish regiment. Nothing was easier than to understand how a wandering, or perhaps ship-wrecked, Irishman could have found his way to Corsica; and probably being illiterate, could have cheerfully accepted the spelling the native would naturally give his name. But if my guess was correct the tradition was lost to him; and the fact no doubt dated a good many generations back. The Man of Science said he had not an Irish skull, but I submitted that it had escaped the blackthorn; or it might have suited his hypercritical mind better.

This reminds me that I have failed to introduce the Man of Science,[1] who ought to have accompanied us from Ajaccio, but whose arrival was delayed from reasons not unconnected with lumbago, for some ten days. Our F.R.S.—for he was no less—has an intimate acquaintance with Corsica, where he first came in the sixties of the past century; and where he has wintered for a good many years. He is an authority on what is colloquially known as the pre-historic age of the island; and (which interested me more) has a considerable acquaintance with its zoology. On this subject he has some

[1] Doctor Forsyth—Major, F.R.S., died 1923.

CORTÉ.

bold theories, one of which is that all the wild animals now found here were introduced by man!

Certainly the list is a small one, but it is difficult to understand anybody troubling to import a weasel. The Romans are credited with a good many acclimatisations of deer, so we may grant him that animal, and even the moufflon, which has so successfully been introduced to Hungary in our own life-time. But what of the bear? Bears were so numerous here a few centuries ago that the people of Corté begged for an arquebus to keep them down, and also the wild sheep which ate all their pastures. The latter exist, but the bears were exterminated long ago, and the other animals bid fair to follow them.

Like their four-footed inhabitants it is to be feared that the forests of Corsica—to me one of its greatest charms—will disappear also. The forest of Zonza ranks amongst the largest in the island. It is literally the tenth in area, extending to some 37,000 acres. But there are several saw-mills at work in it, nor are the goats and other animals strictly excluded.

The worst enemy of Corsican forests is fire—said to be usually incendiary in its origin—which

destroyed no less than 25,000 acres of woodland in the decade ending 1907.

A Commission reported on these things as long ago as 1909. It said: "The soil swept away from the denuded hills goes down to obstruct at the mouths of the streams, which spread their waters over the marshes, and encroaching on the plain thus made uninhabitable. The curse of the destruction of the forests (*déboisement*) threatens, before long, to consummate the devastation of Corsica."

Yet Corsica has only to look across to the Apennines to see what lies before it. Recently schemes have been discussed for utilising the water-power of the Corsican streams. Yet if the forests are destroyed the water will go too. The war, no doubt, is responsible for much, as regulations then relaxed are difficult to enforce now; but it is imperative that this should be done. What is wanted is a specially enlisted forest-police—not Corsican. The sales of timber must be reduced to a minimum, too, for many years; but this presents a further difficulty. Half the forests of the island are owned by the Communes, whilst the State owns very little more than is in private hands. Still it would be something to conserve the forests, which are, in one shape or other, public property. Also it goes with-

out saying that replantation should be undertaken without delay.

Corsica possessed, and still possesses, an enormous quantity of chestnut trees, but these also are in a fair way of destruction, although a large portion of the population depends on chestnut flour for its sustenance; and it is a staple winter food for stock. The owners of the trees, however, have learnt that a quicker, though final, return from these trees can be obtained by felling them for the extraction of pyrogallic acid, which is a process extensively carried out here, and one which bids fair to cause the disappearance of the chestnut tree.

Another native plant—one can hardly call it a tree—which is in danger of disappearing is the *bruyére*. As is well known, the roots of this heath, at about fifteen years' growth, are dug up and exported for the manufacture of "briar-root" pipes. This is a business carried out on a large scale in Corsica. Left to itself the heath would "come again," but it has a sturdy competitor in the common bracken. Those familiar with the Highlands will know how that plant is ousting our native heather on many grouse moors. It is increasing in the same way here, and I noticed that wherever strips of the

forest had been burnt the ground was covered with high bracken. I imagine this will totally dispossess the *bruyére* heath, if not all the plants of the *maquis*, other than the seedling pines. There is, however, one saving clause in the matter; the bracken does not grow at the lower levels; and, indeed, at the upper ones it seems to flourish most luxuriantly where there is some shade. I have no facts as to its introduction here, but I am certain that it will not be many years before it will practically have over-run the forest districts, unless some method of bringing it to profit is found. It may, however, have the good effect of diminishing the forest fires, as there is no use in burning the trees to promote the growth of a useless plant.

Unfortunately, whether from the sudden change of elevation, or from some other reason, the first weeks of our stay at Zonza were synchronous with a return of my Syrian complaint, which made it impossible for me to take any but the mildest exercise. I did, however, get a few miles into the Forest of Zonza, to a saw-mill belonging to our landlord, and lying directly under Monte Calva. The drive there was through noble pine-woods alternating with strips of alder wood along the streams.

Meanwhile the Man of Science was discovering menhirs, and locating possible rock-shelters for future excavation, when the people should have returned to their coastal winter-quarters. Their absence is highly necessary, as they refuse to believe one could dig for anything but treasure, and have spoilt some of his best work in the past by excavations on their own account, when, of course, they found, and threw away, bones and stones which might have been of importance to him.

So far no relics of the palæolithic age have been found in the island, which is fairly rich in those of the later, or neolithic, period.

Our quarters at Zonza left a good deal to be desired, but there was no choice. I had selected the place as one of the highest villages in the island; and also from its proximity to several pine-forests. But I often grieved at the absence of my tent, now reposing in a British warehouse. Corsica seems to me an ideal country for camp life, given certain adjuncts such as that of a good servant. Such a man, with a bicycle to enable him to go daily in search of supplies, is indispensable.

The advantage of a camp is that one can live at a higher level, and nearer the main hills. Corsica is well supplied with water and fire-wood,

both indispensable in camp. Moreover the natives are not "sneak-thieves," and will respect your belongings.

You may have a call from one of the local bandits, but he will at the most ask you for a few cigarettes. Nay more, such an outlaw has been known to act as a representative of law and order, one of them having banished from his district some Italians who had set up in the burglary and petty robbery line.

The "bandits" of Corsica have been written of so often that there is nothing to be said on the subject by me, except for the benefit of those who may not have read any books on the subject.

Briefly, the Corsican bandit is never a robber. Very generally he is guilty of cold-blooded murder —for one or another reason. I know of a case where the Mayor of a Commune took to the hills after falsifying an election return.

As a rule a sojourn in the *maquis* is of limited duration. Some time is required to "arrange" things, but the sentence for murder never exceeds five years.[1] In the worst cases, where the culprit has no grounds for hope, he remains permanently outside the law.

[1] The case mentioned on p. 57 is, I believe, unique.

It is unfortunately the case that there is still a reckless disregard of human life in the island, but with a view to the tourist traffic the local papers never publish such facts as murders. Statistics might alarm the timid; but really the stranger is not the least concerned, for he will not be molested, and will find the worst brigands in Marseilles hotels, and on the cab-box-seats of that city. Should he enter into business relations with the people, however, the case is altered.

As far as the frequent occurrence of homicide is concerned, the usual line of defence of the Corsican press is that it is a thing of the remote past. To prove that this is not so I here quote five extracts from the *Petit Marseillais* of 1921, and two from other papers.

This is from the issue of May the eighth:

> "Vendredi, á Petreto-et-Bicchisano, le bandit Renucci, de Ciamanacce, de passage dans cette commune, eut une altercation avec le nommé Giacomini, jeune homme de 20 ans, contre lequel il braqua son fusil: mais Giacomini détourna le coup et riposta par plusieurs coups de revolver qui abattirent le bandit."

(Translation) "Last Friday at Petreto-and-

Bichisano the bandit Renucci, of Ciamanacce, who was passing through this parish, had a dispute with one Giacomini, a young man of twenty, and levelled his gun at the latter. But Giacomini pushed the barrel aside, and replied with several revolver-shots, which finished the bandit."

The second telegram runs:

BASTIA, 22 *mai*.—Depuis quelque temps, la gendarmerie recherchait un déserteur nommé Siméoni Antoine, condamné á mort par contumace pour avoir, en 1917, tenté d'assassiner le gendarme Toulzé, qui voulait l'appréhender.

Ayant appris que Siméoni était dans lé maquis, une embuscade fut organisée.

Aprés des recherches, le bandit fut aperçu. Celui-ci, armé, se sentant cerné, tira sur les gendarmes. L'un d'eux, Lucchiani, de la brigade d'Evisa, griévement blessé, fut transporté dans une ferme voisine, oú il reçut les premiers soins, qui furent d'ailleurs inutiles, car la victime ne tarda pas á succomber. Pendant ce temps, la fusillade se prolongea. Siméoni, atteint d'une balle, s'affaissa. On parvint alors á l'arretêr, et on le conduisit sous bonne escorte en prison.

(Translation) "BASTIA 22 *May*.—The gendarmerie have been for some time searching for a deserter named Antoine Simeoni, condemned to death, in his absence, for having attempted to murder the gendarme Toulzé, who tried to arrest him.

"It being ascertained that Simeoni was in the *maquis*, an ambuscade was organised. After some searching, he was discovered. Being armed, and finding himself surrounded, the bandit fired on the gendarmes. One of them, Lucchiani, of the Evisa brigade, dangerously wounded, was carried to a neighbouring farm, where he received first aid, which was, however, useless for the victim succumbed shortly. During this time firing went on. Simeoni, hit by a bullet, fell. He was then arrested; and taken to prison by a strong escort."

In the above instance, it will be noted, a death-sentence was passed—probably by a court martial, as the man was a deserter.

There was a recent sequel to this case, from which it appears that the criminal was not arrested at the time of his second murder. It also gives the verdict of a Corsican jury on this double crime.

*Corsican Brigand's Trial*

The trial has begun by court martial at Marseilles of a Corsican brigand of true legendary type who has already been thrice condemned to death. When he was eighteen Antoine Andreani killed a friend during a quarrel arising out of jealousy, and then he took to the forests as an outlaw. He was tried and condemned to death in his absence, but the police were unable to lay hands on him. One day, after he had taken refuge in a lonely cottage, he found the place surrounded by the police, and decided to make a dash for freedom, after warning the police that he would shoot anyone who attempted to arrest him. As he broke through the surrounding cordon the police fired and wounded him in the head, but he held them at bay, and made his escape after shooting one officer dead. A second time he was tried and sentenced to death in his absence. During the war a court martial passed a third death sentence on the fugitive, who in the meantime had married and had two children in his forest retreat. Recently, tired of his fugitive existence, he surrendered to the police,

but on being re-tried for two cases of murder he was acquitted on the ground that he acted under provocation. But the military authorities were not willing to expunge his condemnation as a deserter, and are now trying him again on this charge. His voluntary surrender weighed in his favour with the civil judges. Whether it serves him as well before the military court will not be known until to-morrow.—*Daily Telegraph* 12/2/23.[1]

The more usual sentence is as given in the following extract:

*Cour d'Assises de la Corse*

" BASTIA, 13 *mai*.—Le nommé Alfonsi Noël, 52 ans, berger, demeurant á Albertacci, accusé d'avoir, le 20 janvier 1921, á Muro tué M. Santini Barthélemy, a comparu devant le jury. Reconnu coupable, Alfonsi est condamné á 5 ans de prison."

(Translation) " *Corsican Assize Court*

" BASTIA, 13 *May*.—Noël Alfonsi, 52 years of age, shepherd, living at Albertacce, and accused of

[1] The *Daily Telegraph* never published the result of this final court martial; nor have I been able to ascertain what it was. The newspaper also gives the name differently.

having killed M. Barthélemy Santini at Muro on the 20th of January, 1921, appeared before the jury. He was found guilty and sentenced to five years' inprisonment."

This sentence may be compared with the following, inflicted for what we should call aggravated assault.

"BASTIA, 14 *mai*.—Le nommé Angeli Charles-Louis, 29 ans, cultivateur, accusé de violences sur ses pére et mêre, a comparu devant la cour d'assises. M. Ghilini, substitut du procureur genéral, occupait le siége du ministére public. Mes. Thiers et de Montera étaient au banc de la défense. Reconnu coupable des faits qui lui étaient reprochés, avec l'excuse de la provocation, Angeli a été condamné á deux ans de prison."

(Translation) "BASTIA, 14 *May*.—Charles-Louis Angeli, 29 years of age, an agricultural labourer, was brought before the Assize Court, accused of assaulting his father and mother. M. Ghilini, acting for the *procureur général*, prosecuted, Mes. Thiers and de Montera defended the accused. Being found guilty of the charges, but under pro-

vocation, Angeli was sentenced to two years' imprisonment."

In the following extract, a reason is given for the non-infliction of the death-penalty; and the sentence is much more severe than usual.

*Cour d'Assises de la Corse*

"BASTIA, 22 *mai*.—Stéfanaggi Antoine-Louis, 72 ans, cultivateur á Cannelle, accuse d'avoir, le 20 décembre 1920, volontairement donné la mort á Piani François-Marie, âgé de 36 ans, a comparu, hier, devant la cour d'assises. M. Gauger, avocat général, a développé les moyens qui approuvent l'accusation; Me. Moretti, partie civile, a développé ses conclusions; Mes. Colombani et de Montéra ont présenté la défense de l'accusé, qui reconnu coupable de meurtre, n'est condamné, en raison de son grand âge, qu'a dix ans de réclusion."

(Translation) "*Corsican Assize Court*

"BASTIA, 22 *May*.—Antoine-Louis Stefanaggi, 72 years of age, an agricultural labourer at Cannelle, appeared before the Assize Court yesterday, charged with having intentionally killed François Marie Piani, 36 years of age. . . The accused being

found guilty of murder, was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment only, on account of his great age."

'An August number brings a regular bouquet of crimes of violence, two being of the very worst Corsican type. This is the extract:

*Trois Drames en Corse*

"AJACCIO, 8 *août*.—A Radicale, hameau de la commune de Cauro, le nommé Barthélemy Usciati, cultivateur, a été tué de deux coups de fusil pendant qu'il faisait boire ses bêtes, á la fontaine située non loin de sa maison; la scène fut sans témoins. Le parquet a ouvert une enquête sur ce crime assez mystérieux.

A Zigliara, le brigadier de gendarmerie Artigaud a reçu deux balles de revolver pendant qu'il pénétrait à la caserne; les coups avaient été tirés d'un fourré voisin. Le brigadier Artigaud succomba presque aussitôt. On suppose que c'est un acte de vengeance, mais le crime étonne beaucoup, car aucun ennemi apparent n'était connu au brigadier.

A Olmeto, à la suite d'une discussion futile entre Morganti, 18 ans, et Géronimi, 40 ans,

cinq coups de revolver ont été échangés. Morganti a été blessé à l'épaule et à l'index droit et Géronimi à l'avant-bras droit."

(Translation) "*Three Tragedies in Corsica*

"AJACCIO, 8 *August*.—At Radicale, a hamlet in the parish of Cauro, a farmer called Barthélemy Usciati, was killed by two gun-shots received in the act of watering his cattle at a fountain near his house. There were no witnesses. The authorities have commenced an inquiry into this mysterious crime.

At Zigliara, the Gendarmerie Brigadier Artigaud received two revolver bullets as he was entering the barracks, the shots being fired from a neighbouring thicket. Brigadier Artigaud died almost immediately. It is supposed that the act was one of revenge, but the crime has caused much astonishment, as the brigadier was not known to have any declared enemy.

At Olmeto, as the result of a silly argument between a lad of 18, called Morganti, and a man of 40, named Géronimi, five revolver-shots were exchanged. Morganti was wounded in the shoulder and in the right forefinger; and Géronimi in the right forearm."

A few weeks later we get the following—the extract this time being from the *Petit Provençal:*

ASSASSINAT D'UN GARDE-CHAMPETRE
*Les Suites d'un Proces-Verbal*

VENZOLASCA, 22 *Août.*

"A la suite d'un procès-verbal dressé pù Croce Antoine garde-champêtre de Sarba-Ocagnano, le nommé Germani Jean-Camille l'a tué.

Germani Jean-Camille qui, il y a quelque temps, s'était déjà livré à une tentative de meurtre, sur la personne du garde-champêtre.

Croce venait de rentrer et son diner achevé, vint, comme chaque soir, s'asseoir sur le seuil de la demeure de ses voisins, Tomasi Damien. Il y était depuis un moment. La famille Tomasi étant à table, lorsqu'il vit venir à lui, courant et armé, Germani Jean-Camille. Croce comprenant que Germani en voulait à sa vie, se hàta vers l'intèrieur de la maison, poursuivi par Germani qui traversa en courant la première Salle, pénètra dans la chambre ou Croce s'était refugié, et l'abattit de plusieurs coups de revolver.

Croce était âgé de 30 ans et était pére de deux enfants. Ce lâche assassinat a soulevé,

dans tout le canton de Vescovato une vive indignation. Le meurtrier s'est soustrait par la fuite à l'enquête judiciaire aussitôt ouverte."

(Translation)

"ASSASSINATION OF A GARDE-CHAMPETRE[1]

*The Result of a Prosecution*

"As the result of a prosecution instituted by Antoine Croce, *garde-champêtre* of Sarba-Ocagnano, this official has been killed by one Jean-Camille Germani.

"Jean-Camille Germani made a previous attempt to murder the *garde-champêtre* some time ago.

"Croce had not long come in, and after his dinner he went, as usual, to sit on the doorstep of his neighbour, Damien Tomasi. He had only been there a moment, the Tomasi family being still at table, when he saw Jean-Camille running towards him, weapon in hand. Croce, understanding that Germani wanted to kill him, hurried into the interior of the house, pursued by Germani who ran through the first room, and penetrating into that in which

[1] There is no English equivalent for this expression, which means one whose duties are to protect the crops and gardens of the parish which employs him.

Croce had taken refuge, killed him with several shots from his revolver.

"Croce was thirty years of age, and the father of two children. This cowardly murder has caused lively indignation in all the parish of Vescovato. The murderer has escaped by his flight from the judicial inquiry which was promptly commenced."

Nor did the year 1922 lag far behind its predecessor. It opened with the trial of the murderer of Ghisonnaccia, to which crime I have elsewhere referred. The cause of quarrel appeared to have been the division of a consignment of boots! But the assassin got off with the usual two years.

Then followed a crime, committed not far away from Travo, where I was then staying.

This was in so far an exceptional case, as both the parties were men of education, the actual criminal being an *advocat*. It happened at Solenzara, the capital of a district marked by many crimes. The cause of quarrel was the administration of an estate. The lawyer went to his adversary's house, where heated language was exchanged on the subject. Nevertheless his host, so to call him, politely escorted him to the front door. Having reached this, the *advocat* pulled out

a pistol, shot the other man through the chest, and fled.

The result was peculiar. Serious as the wound was, the victim recovered; and the parties were reconciled. The law took no notice of this murderous attack, which, notorious as it was, was carefully kept out of the newspapers.

Worse was to follow. I quote the *Eveil de la Corse* for the 2nd of May, 1922.

*Rixe Sanglante à Olivèse*

" Une rixe dout on ignore encore les causes, mais dont les consequénces sont effroyables, s'est produite hier à 14 h. 45 à Olivèse, entre les familles Paoletti Pierre et Sarti François.

Au cours de cette rixe, deux hommes ont été tués; MM. Sarti Dominique, 32 ans, cultivateur, et Paoletti Pierre, 54 ans, cantonnier. Trois autres personnes ont été grièvement blessees: MM. Paoletti Augustin, 32 ans facteur postes à Paris; Braganti Louis, 38 ans et Sarti François.

MM. Sarti Joseph et Buresi Sanvitus, qu'on croit ête les auteurs de ce massacre, sont en fuite.

La gendarmerie a ouvert une enquête et le

parquet de Sartène, prèvenu, s'est rendu sur les lieux pour connaître de ce déplorable incident."

(Translation) "*A Bloody Brawl at Olivèse*

"A brawl, of which the causes are unknown, but of which the results were frightful, happened at 2.45 p.m. yesterday at Olivèse, the participants being the families of Peter Paoletti and of François Sarti.

"During this fight two men were killed, Mr Dominique Sarti, farmer, 32 years of age, and Mr Peter Paoletti, road-man, 54 years of age. Seriously wounded are three other men, Mr Augustine Paoletti, a postman in Paris, 32 years of age, Mr Louis Braganti, 38 years of age, and Mr François Sarti.

"Messrs Joseph Sarti and Sanvitus Buresi, believed to be the originators of this massacre, have fled.

"The gendarmerie have opened an inquiry; and the authorities of Sartène, on being advised, have proceeded to the spot to investigate this deplorable occurrence."

I believe the cause of this miniature skirmish was the refusal of a young member of one of these

families to carry out his contract to marry a girl of the other.

The irony of fate brought the President of the French Republic through the very scene of this combat not so very many days later; but I will venture to guess that it was not one of the objects of interest pointed out to him by his official escort.

Now I challenge any impartial reader of this record (certainly an incomplete one) of some fifteen months' Corsican homicide to point out any feature which can in any way be called romantic or interesting in the same.

I do not hesitate to say that the principal cause of these wicked, and often secret and treacherous, murders is the comparative immunity which the assassins can anticipate. The guillotine has not been erected in Corsica for years. Bring it back, and you will soon see a very different state of things, especially if, at the same time, a general disarmament of the population is carried out. "Opportunity makes the thief," says the old proverb. The carrying of firearms certainly makes the murderer, as the ten thousand odd victims, annually sacrificed in this manner in the United States, could testify.[1]

[1] During the week in which I revise the typescript of this chapter there have been two men killed in Corsica

In local parlance a man who is "wanted" is "in the *maquis*," this last being the often-written-of "bush" of Corsica, which is not peculiar to the island, but found on most Mediterranean coasts. It is formed of Mediterranean heath, which grows to a dozen feet high, myrtle, gum-cistus, arbutus, cork-oak, and occasional young pine. After all I had read of it I confess it disappointed me. The Man of Science points out that it is really a transition, and that if it were left to itself it would in half a century or so develop into a forest, but I am not quite clear that this is the case. Anyhow, as it is always cut or burnt off sooner, the question must remain an academic one.

To return to the camp question. As I have said above, we had no tents with us, but we had the permission of the Ministry in Paris to make use of the forest houses throughout the island, which at all events enabled us to spend time at places away from the villages. Such permissions are difficult to get, and cannot be obtained in this island.

The forest houses vary, according to the capabili-

by the discharge of automatic pistols. In each case the matter was held by the authorities to be accidental. The question of the illegality of the homicides carrying such weapons was apparently never considered. The evidence would certainly not have satisfied a British jury!

ties of their occupants. The wife of one *garde* may be an excellent cook, and that of another may be entirely absent at the time of your arrival. Indeed, discipline is so lax in the forest service that when we mentioned our intention of going to the first house of this kind that we visited the villagers remarked:

"We can send a note to the *garde* if he is there, but half the year he is away with his family down at the seaside."

In the case in question it was a libel, for the man in charge called on us at Zonza on the Wednesday, and announced his readiness to receive us on the following Saturday.

# CHAPTER IV

## A FOREST LODGE

THE matter of transport proved less easy of arrangement. We had hopes of a wagonette, but the owner, after promising us a decision at five o'clock on the eve of our departure, was still absent at nine. So in fear of being left in the lurch we made terms with O'Leary for his cabriolet, into which we were all packed soon after luncheon on the following day. A Corsican "cabriolet" is merely a cart with indifferent springs. We three packed in in front. Behind was a chair, which the proud owner said he would occupy during the descent beyond the Pass. Meanwhile he would walk. The machine was drawn by a small mule, black, and spotted with white, *à la* Tetrarch. Soon after reaching the high forest the road dips for some way, and we got up a trot with the help of the scientist's alpenstock, so leaving O'Leary behind. But we soon struck very steep slopes, and, in pity for the little mare, my wife and I

walked up to the pass, nearly four miles farther. O'Leary, by using steep short-cuts, caught us up at a cantonnier's house 3,300 feet up. From this point the scenery grew magnificent. In their description of the Col de Bavella the guide books for once do not exaggerate. As we ascended oaks replaced the ilex of the lower slopes, till at last, on the pass itself, we found only old pines twisted by the wind into the weirdest shapes, and all bent towards the north. We were now some 4,000 feet above sea level. Here we were asked to resume our seats, and our pilot curtly asked me to "take the chair"—at the back—and very dusty I found it. We rattled down steeper slopes than we had ascended, passing row on row of primitive huts—stone walls roofed in with pine planks—the numerous residences of peasants from the malarious districts coastwards; and then plunged into young pine forest, full of goats—in spite of the law. It took us a very short time to reach the forest house of Alza. This is beautifully situated on a shelf overlooking the valley of the Solenzara and the eastern sea. Elba and Monte Cristo are said to be visible from the pass itself, but it was not clear enough for us to see them on this occasion.

We found ourselves in better quarters here than

at Zonza. The entire first floor of the building is given up to guest rooms.

The views on every hand were magnificent. To our right was the perforated peak (Tafonato), to the left the huge aiguilles with which we had grown familiar. In front the valley was almost barred by a rock of red granite, on the top of which are some traces of building said to have been a castle "in Saracen times." All the surrounding mountains are red granite.

Although we were 250 feet lower here than at Zonza we found the air distinctly fresher than at the latter place.

Our host had brought us a nice dish of trout from the San Pietro stream, which falls into the Solenzara just below. He had good reports of the sport of his forest. Moufflon, he said, were fairly plentiful on the opposite hills; and, as everywhere in Corsica, there were plenty of wild boar. I promised him a longer visit later on, for I had not much difficulty in believing his statement. This was the place selected by the Prince of Monaco not long before—an occasion on which he killed one moufflon and one of the other guns a second.

The ground, however, looked fearsome, especially to an invalid, and more like ibex country than wild

MOUFFLON.

sheep ground. I foresaw I should have stiffer work than I had had after the wild sheep of Cyprus, which, though also inhabiting pine forest, live in such as rarely contain rocks of any importance. I swept the rocks extending up to the Tafonato di Paliri for some time with the glass without detecting any sign of animal life.

I had, I confess, had some doubts as to the continued existence of the moufflon in Corsica. All my friends who had bagged these animals had done so in the adjacent island of Sardinia, and they had gone there on information received that it was of no use to go to the French island.

But the moufflon is by no means extinct in Corsica; and if energetic measures were taken for its protection I have no doubt the species would soon become numerous again. That it has not been exterminated is due to the nature of the country and its vegetation, which enables it frequently to pass unperceived, though the tracts which it prefers are pretty well known to the natives; and of course it suffers from the fact that the Corsican is rarely far away from his gun.

In such a country as I have described stalking is a difficulty, though it should be otherwise amidst the barren rocks of the Niolo district to the north.

The natives only know one method of shooting them —driving with beaters and dogs, which they apply equally to the wild boar and to the few remaining deer of the island. I suspect the bulk of the moufflon killed here are "plastered" with large shot or slugs. Age or sex are not considered; anything that passes within range is fired at. Nevertheless the results are meagre, as is usually the case in driving game.

The following article appeared in a local paper about the time of my arrival in the island. I reproduce it with apologies to its author.

### Impressions d'un Exilé

*Le Mouflon du Jardin des Plantes*

"Sa cage m'apparut comme la tombe d'un être cher. Sur la plaque d'émail bleu des lettres blanches se détachaient à la façon d'un epitaphe:

'*Ovis musimon corsicanus.*'

Ses yeux couleur de maquis disaient la nostalgie des hautes montagnes; son pelage fauve avait les tons sévères des larix de la forêt natale; ses jambes nerveuses, faites pour l'escalade des rochers à pic, manifestaient

l'impatience par des piétimente inquiets, des détentes électriques.

Des passants lui jetaient du pain qu'il dédaignait de flairer.

De petites chèvres, parquées tout à coté, passaient leurs têtes gracieuses à travers le grille de son reduit. Il les regardait d'un air morne, leurs formes mièvres n'eveillaient pas son rut; peut-être songeait-il aux robustes femelles aux flancs rebondis du Creno ou des fourrés de Libbio?

Jamais plus il ne broutera les mousses parfumées et les lichens poussés aux escarpements du Rotondo coiffé de neige; ni l'herbe tendre qui pointait drue sous les pins d'Aitone, ni les feuilles vertes et lustrées des arbousiers aux baies rouges, délices des merles au bec d'ambre et des grives bariolées.

Jamais plus il ne boira au lit de galets blancs et roses du Liamone et de le Catena, l'eau limpide et l'écume laiteuse . . . l'eau qui court, l'eau qui chante. . . . Dans une cuve étroite et sale les gardiens ont versé un limon vert.

Soudain, il humait l'air étouffant de sa geole, un éclair de révolte incendait sa prunelle; d'un

saut, il tentait en vain l'escalade. Son impuissance alors l'exaspérait, il reculait jusqu'au fond de sa cage, puis, l'échine tendue, les cornes hautes, d'un élan brutal, il venait heurter les solides barreaux de la grille. Un filet de bave filtrait à sa bouche, son regard se voilait de désespérance. Il demeaurait immobile. . . .

Main puissante qui avez arraché cette vie aux voûtes du maquis natal, qui avez saisi aux cimes lointaines ce merveilleux produit, dans le suite des siècles, vers un ideal de souplesse et de force, pour le livrer aux lazzis crapuleux due gavroche ou au regarde stupide des nounous, quelle peut-être votre fin?

Replacez ce souffle, cette flamme, au sein des elements qui l'ont fait surgir!

Et ramenez aux fourrés épais, aux calanques de granit, aux torrents cristallins, aux golfes bleus et insondables, au terroir des ancêtres, les enfants de Cyrnos aux reins rétifs, à l'œil d'aigle; les fils de Corse, transplantés, rivés à la chaine infame de l'arbitraire, qui étouffent sous un ciel lourd, et qui meurent lorsqu'ils s'abreuvent aux cloaques infects où croupit la boue."

PIERRE ROCA.

(Translation)

## Impressions of an Exile

### *The Moufflon at the Jardin des Plantes*

His cage struck me as being the tomb of a dear friend. Like an epitaph the following inscription, in white letters on a blue ground,

"*Ovis musimon corsicanus*,"

surmounted it.

His *maquis*-coloured eyes told of the nostalgia of high mountains; his tawny coat showed the dark shades of the pines of his native forests, his sinewy legs, made for the ascent of sheer cliffs, revealed impatience by restless pawings, and sudden starts.

The passers-by threw him bread, at which he was too proud to sniff.

Little nanny-goats, in the adjoining enclosure, put their pretty heads through the bars of his cage. He looked at them dully; their common shapes did not arouse his passions; perhaps he was thinking of the sturdy ewes on the rounded hill of Creno, or in the coverts of Libbio?

Never again shall he crop the perfumed mosses and the lichen growing on the flanks of moss-crowned Rotondo, nor the young grass which grows under the

pines of Aitone, nor the smooth green leaves of the arbutus whose red berries form the great delicacy both of yellow-beaked blackbirds and spotted thrushes.

Never shall he drink again in the white and pink pebbled bed of the Liamone or the Catena—limpid water and milky foam. . . . In a small and dirty pot his keepers have poured him out a greenish, muddy liquid.

Suddenly he snuffed the suffocating air of his jail, a flash of revolt shone in his pupil, with a leap he tried to climb out. His impotence exasperated him; he backed to the end of his cage, and then stiffening his neck, his horns ready, he threw himself with a frantic rush against the bars. A thread of saliva fell from his mouth; his look grew dim from despair. He remained motionless.

Oh! powerful hand who hast taken this being from the cover of its native *maquis*, who hast seized in distant climes this wonderful approach to the ideal of activity and strength, to expose it to the stupid jokes of hooligans and the silly inspection of nurse-girls, what can be your object? Send back this soul of flame to the elements that gave it birth!

And return to the dense thickets, to the *calancas* [1]

[1] Aiguilles of rock.

of granite, to the crystal torrents, to the blue and bottomless bays, to the ancestral strongholds, the children of Cyrnos, the stalwart and eagle-eyed; the sons of Corsica, transported, and riveted to the abominable chain of destiny, who suffocate beneath your foggy skies; and who die when they drink from the filthy sewers where the mud creeps along.

PIERRE ROCA.

The writer's ideas are poetic, and as a matter of strict fact these moufflon are generally captured in their earliest infancy, when they are usually reared without difficulty. Like all such pets they become a nuisance when they reach maturity; and can give a nasty blow with their heads. Their ultimate fate, as a rule, is to be killed for the benefit of some "sportsman" who wishes to exhibit a moufflon head to friends at home.

At all events the Alza was "Wild Corsica" with a vengeance, and in winter it must be a lonely spot. At present the flocks and herds made it seem less so, but I noticed that during our forty-eight hours' stay only one cart passed up the road, and hardly any pedestrians.

The Man of Science, who knows the whole island

thoroughly, expressed his opinion that this place was far finer, as scenery, than anything else to be seen in the country. So we had made a pretty good beginning in our search.

The Man of Science found himself *en pays de connaissance* here, for he had met our hostess when he was engaged in excavations at Conca, a village by the sea, her husband indeed being a brother of the priest of that place, and he himself a landowner there. He was to some extent a travelled man, having been formerly in the Forest Service at Setif in the province of Constantine, from which he had been transferred to this place fourteen years before. The life he leads is really idyllic, for he has nothing to do, except, indeed, to look after his vineyards at Conca. Nor does his only neighbour, the cantonnier, seem to be overwhelmed either, for he sat under the cherry trees in the garden during most of our stay. In more ways than one their life is patriarchal, for they have fourteen children between them!

After an excellent dinner, to which, and to our host's wine and arbutus-berry brandy, we did ample justice, we were not sorry to seek early beds. From mine I next morning saw the sun rise over the sea—a sight I had not seen for a long time. Sunrise synchronised with a violent thunderstorm, the peals

echoing finely from the rocky peaks above our heads. The day that followed was cloudy; but of course it cleared up when I went for a walk down the road, and made my return unpleasantly hot. Nor did the walk disclose much of interest, the wonderful rock peaks being equally visible from the Forest House. What I did see was a vast *brulée*, as they call it in Canada, the trace of a huge forest fire, extending, I was told, almost to the sea. As long as the law excluding flocks and herds from the forests is not enforced, as it is not now, these fires will continue, the incendiaries being actuated simply by the desire of getting better grazing for their stock. It would be interesting to compare the number and acreage of forest fires in this island with those of Cyprus, the proportion of forests in each probably being similar.

After lunch my wife went off fishing with the Forest Guard, and I took a path which led me down to the stream below the perforated peak. It was little more than a cattle-path, the traces of stock being everywhere so visible; and the woods had a neglected appearance. Thinning of the younger stuff is, I suppose, impracticable; but the older seemed scanty and ill-looked after. "Corsican forests do not pay," said the forester. But they should if they were intelligently managed and

capably administered. The fact is they pay those who handle the product well enough; and there is a sufficient market for much more, which could be grown without planting, if the laws were enforced.

Clouds hung low about the peaks this afternoon, and threatening rain discouraged my going far afield. I was not surprised (because I was getting used to it) but vexed at the absence of animal (other than domestic) life in these woods. It is true my dogs picked up a stale scent in the morning, that of a wandering fox or hare probably, but they failed to make it good. Of the larger birds I saw one pigeon and two jays. Why these rock fastnesses should be devoid of the falcon and crow tribes it is hard to say. The Man of Science suggests that it is because the local sportsmen kill off all that which these birds could eat. As for the Corsican eagle it must indeed be a rare bird. I heard one was being hawked about for sale in Ajaccio, but I did not see it.[1]

At tea-time our fisherwoman returned with some trout, but the fish were not rising freely, as was only to be expected on so heavy and thunderous a day. The threatened rain passed off, however, and the next morning was fine and clear.

[1] I just saw one at Casabianda the following year, but not sufficiently well for identification. Probably an osprey on passage.

Strange to say the trout of Corsica are not of the same variety as those of Sardinia, the latter belonging to the Moroccan species, whilst the Corsican fish is European.

As they have practically no natural enemies here, where there are no otters, no herons, no kingfishers, no moor-hens, and no other fish (except eels) they are extraordinarily numerous, and probably, as a consequence, mostly small. I have only seen one anywhere approaching to a pound in weight. I remarked to our host one day, on his producing a dishful of "fingerlings," that in England he could be prosecuted for that.

"Ah!" he replied, "but here there is no one to see me."

I infer, therefore, that here is another law which nobody troubles to enforce.

"The laws," our Man of Science is fond of quoting, "are there, but who is there to enforce them?" ("*Le leggi son', ma chi pon' man' ad esse?*"—Dante.)

To shoot here, one must have a licence, costing some sixteen shillings. But to go after wild boar it is not even necessary to have a permit to carry arms, these being destructive animals. I have no doubt, therefore, that if the unlicensed shooter were

ever challenged, which he never is, he would simply say he was after boar, and go free. Of course *off his own land* he has no such right, unless taking part in a wild boar shoot authorised by the Maire, who must notify the Gendarmerie.

Our Hibernian charioteer turned up betimes next day, unharnessed his mule, and went off with the Forest Guard to fish. In our own island we should have called it a hopeless enterprise on so bright a day, and with the streams clear as gin, but having grubbed up a box of worms they started hopefully, and returned with some fish. I suppose the trout here are both numerous and hungry, and cannot afford to be as critical as our more sophisticated fish.

I myself took a ramble in the forest, but the pleasure of it was a good deal spoiled for me by its likeness to a farmyard. On every side were cow-bells, goat-bells and shouts of shepherds. Such a forest is too tame for me. I contrasted it with the magnificent ones on the Montenegrin frontier, where the silence was only broken by the bark of an alarmed roebuck, or the whistle of a chamois, but where also, instead of only seeing as I did here, a couple of jays and a pigeon, one's eyes were constantly pleased with the sight of an eagle or even *lammergeier*—capercailzie or willow grouse

—and by every variety of ornamental bird, hoopoes, bee-eaters, golden orioles, and so forth.

The animals here, too, are extraordinarily limited in number, and indeed in species. Corsica has no badgers, no polecats, no squirrels, and no otters. Bears are extinct, and there never were any wolves. The smaller animals also present few species, as do the reptiles. There are no poisonous snakes in Corsica, which is a good thing.

Our hostess quite surpassed herself at lunch that day, especially as meat was not obtainable, so I give her production as a specimen Corsican *menu*:

Hors d'œuvres. Salami and Radishes
Omelet
Fried Trout
Volauvent
Cherries, *Broccio*, Wild Strawberries
Coffee and *Chasse*

The whole washed down with excellent Conca wine. The *Broccio* is one of the special delicacies of the island, and is a cream cheese without salt. It is eaten indifferently as cheese or as cream with preserve. We found it delicious.

Our farewells said, and the little mule harnessed up, we made a start for home. To expect it to pull us up the tremendous hill was absurd. I walked all the way to the Col, my wife joining me half-way,

and the Man of Science the last quarter. Taking things easily like this enabled one to get a better view of the scenery all the way to the sea. It took two hours for the cart to reach the Pass, though it is only some four miles and a half from the Forest Lodge.

Thence we rattled down to Zonza in almost an hour more. On the way I noticed rather more birds than usual—a sparrow-hawk, a pair of pigeons and a green woodpecker.

# CHAPTER V

## A HILL VILLAGE

CORSICA was visited this year by a severe outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease. I was astonished to see the casual manner in which the authorities dealt with this. Here, in Zonza, there seemed to be no attempt whatever to segregate the sick animals; nor were any destroyed. In fact the common practice seemed to be to tie them up by the road-side, as if to facilitate the transmission of the disease by passing animals. As far as I could learn no veterinary assistance was given.

On account of this the people were loath to come to the mountains from the coastward district, preferring the risk of fever for themselves to that of the disease for their animals. As far as we were concerned this was all to the good, as an overcrowded village is naturally not a pleasant residence.

Indeed, I am not prepared to say that village life in Corsica is pleasant at all, although I found the

exterior cleaner than I had expected. But as there are no separated houses, if one has no camp, one must live in a village. Another one that we visited at this time is the small one of Quenza, but it hardly repaid us for a hot five-mile walk. It is certainly in itself prettier than Zonza, with much running water and trees. The forests in the neighbourhood have, however, been destroyed.

It contains that which is rare in Corsica, some relics of the feudal period. In this case they consist of an armorial tomb in the old church, and of the house of the local noble family, or rather of one of them; for Quenza also boasts of two others, the Orsati and the Filippi. We went down a dirty lane to see the latter, but found it of no extraordinary interest; and it was closed. On the house a tablet records in barbarous Latin the fact that it was built by the family of Colonna Cesari, which claims descent from the great Roman house. Heraldry in Corsica, however, is based entirely on tradition; and though books exist on the subject, it is exceedingly rare for proofs to appear in their pages. In this case the descent appears to be authoritatively proved; but possibly it would fail to satisfy Mr. Oswald Barron, who once remarked to the writer: "I am now satisfied that there are not more

than two families in England whose descent from Saxon times, in the same place, is capable of proof; and I am doubtful about one of these."

Be this as it may, in the case before us we had at any rate a family of undoubted ancient descent *in situ;* and one moreover which had exercised almost royal power over this part of the island in the past; but which was content to pass its summers in part of a house of the poorest appearance, and situate amidst surroundings little, if at all, short of squalid. The one end of the house was occupied by a woman holding a child obviously in an advanced stage of measles, which effectively put us to flight, and we struck across a rocky green into our homeward road.

This was not quite so solitary as it had been in the morning, for we met a good many cabriolets conveying families coming up from the coast for the summer.

These vehicles, and the great two-wheeled wood-wagons form nineteen-twentieths of the traffic of these hill roads. Of the latter I would say that they seemed to me extraordinarily clumsy and ineffective for their purpose. In the first place they are enormously heavy, and consequently can only carry a very moderate load in addition to their own

weight. Only one unfortunate mule is in the shafts, but in front of this there are a pair, and then two more in tandem. The leader is consequently four lengths from the load—in other words useless.

These carts will soon be a mere picturesque survival, for the motor-lorry will run them off the road as soon as petrol is once more plentiful and inexpensive.

Much more rarely one sees an ox-cart of primitive structure—prehistoric, in fact, as we told the Man of Science. He agreed that but for the iron bands (you could hardly call them tyres) they were such.

As for those who travel by or accompany these conveyances, their appearance presents little of interest. The national costume of Corsica seems likely to die out with the present generation. It is rare to see the younger men dressed in the brown velvet cord suit and broad brimmed hat of their fathers; though the girls seem to adhere to the black handkerchief and sombre dress of their mothers. Considering the wonderful variety and gorgeous appearance of the costumes of the inhabitants of the neighbouring island of Sardinia it is curious that Corsica has no local varieties of dress, and so little colour in what is worn. The very characteristic flat hat of the women, which is the shape of a

dinner plate, and is worn over the black head-kerchief, is now rare. I have only seen it in the Ajaccio district.

Corsican women seem to ride indifferently astride or sideways—in the latter case on a pack-saddle or pad, the side-saddle being unknown. They seem quite at home on horseback; and as for the men they ride from childhood. Moreover the horses and mules are habitually under-fed and very quiet.

A mule carrying a load is of course a common object, but, strange to say, I have only seen one regular and properly equipped pack-train, although half the summer habitations of these districts are inaccessible to wheeled traffic.

I give an illustration of a coat of arms from the church at Quenza.

The heraldry of Corsica (I am afraid this has

nothing to do with my subject, but it is difficult to neglect one's hobbies entirely) presents some interesting features. Generally speaking the coats of arms in use here are of a florid nature with numerous charges; and with hardly an exception bearing coronets of nobility. Amongst the charges three recur with bewildering frequency. These are a tower, a lion, and a balance.

The plainer coats used are of those of famous families of Europe—Grimaldi, Lanfranchi, Malaspina, Savelli, and so forth; but into the thorny question of the right of the Corsican users in each case I must decline to enter.

For quiet dignity the original arms of the Bonaparte family are hard to beat. They are *Gules, two bends or, between two mullets of the second.* I think the Emperor Napoleon would have been well advised not to adopt new ones, as he did.

As it was Quenza that brought me to this subject I will describe another beautiful coat from that place: *Azure, three chevrons gules.*

This was borne by the executor of the will of the famous Rinuccio della Rocca, on whose wife's tomb are depicted the arms shown in the illustration.

# CHAPTER VI

## HARVEST TIME

JUNE had not ended before we had had our first forest fire, and this was unusual. They mostly occur later in the year. On this occasion there was fortunately little wind; and the fire was got under fairly promptly. It took place on the lower slopes of the Queredetella, one of the series of rocky peaks that shut one in on the east as one goes up to the Col de Bavella. Though there were no flames—at all events visible at the distance of a mile or so—the grey columns of smoke rolling up through the dark green of the pines proved an impressive sight. Six weeks later it was on fire again within a mile of the same place, but not badly.

On the 12th of July (fit date to one of his Ulster ancestry) we lost our Man of Science, who departed for St. Lucia di Tallano, after a few days at which village he was to go on to Ajaccio, and travel thence to Alsace, not to return to Corsica till the end of the summer. Needless to say the loss of his cheery

company was a serious one to us; but his work in the district was done; and life in the now crowded village was hardly a pleasure sufficient to warrant further unnecessary stay.

Relics of the past being so exceedingly rare in this country I was surprised to hear of a "castle" not five miles away. Unfortunately it is described as entirely inaccessible even by the most intrepid of climbers. It is said to lie above the empty cantonnier's house, Balatoghia, which I mentioned as standing at 3,300 feet elevation on the road to the Bavella pass.

I am irresistibly reminded of a feudal castle in the desert east of Petra of which I had heard the year before. This appears to be authentic, and is entirely surrounded by quicksands, the clue to the passage being lost. It may be that there, when it is reached by aeroplane or otherwise, we shall find an untouched relic of Crusade times. Here I expected at most to find that the decay of a draw-bridge had isolated some crumbling walls; but the accounts of its position were so contradictory and dubious that we finally renounced the search for it.

Even at the elevation at which we found ourselves the heat in July was unpleasantly great, though the nights as a rule were cool.

We tried the experiment of passing the days in the forests, taking with us a picnic luncheon; and there it was pleasant enough. It was unfortunately not possible to combine such outings with fishing, as the trout, naturally, were not disposed to rise in such weather.

Our trips only confirmed previous experience as to the absence of animal life from these woodlands. I noted that on one day during which we were seven hours in the forest of Zonza, I saw one blackbird, and not very many small birds. Animals, other than domestic, we saw none, although accompanied by dogs which could be trusted to put up anything near them. This absence of life makes a woodland country wanting in interest. The commonest bird of any size here is the jay, which is fairly often visible, probably, I should have said, because uneatable; but the Man of Science assures me a dish of these birds was served to him on one occasion at Asco, and, although he could not eat it, it was not looked upon as unusual.

In two months I saw one pair of ravens; and a single pair of buzzards were often about.

Another of the larger birds which I added to my list about this time was the barn-owl, one of which flapped across the road in front of me about sunset

one evening. The scops-owl cried melodiously in the woods all night.

As the month wore on conditions became more unpleasant, and the heat seemed to be increased by the constant fires on the hillsides round us. These were not very near, and as a rule they were confined to the *maquis*, though we heard that the large communal forest of Cagna had been destroyed. The smoke was sufficient to mitigate the power of the sun, and even, on one day, to hide the aiguilles of Bavella from view. Some of the fire and smoke effects were quite fine; and I have a vivid recollection of waking one night in the small hours, and going to the window to watch the high peak above Quenza flaming in the silence in a very colourable imitation of Stromboli—the only active volcano with which I am familiar, as I have already said.

In such weather there was nothing to be done, and as a matter of fact I went out but little. The "hotel" had proved impossible; and we therefore had our meals at home.

Towards the end of the month a great gale appreciably lowered the temperature, and made conditions more pleasant. But as it was not accompanied by rain it did not remove the dust nuisance. None falls here as a rule at this season; and this

year the spring drought had made matters worse.

August began with another spell of heat—described by the natives as "quite unusual"—but they always do that in every country when the season is disagreeable.

On the 8th of the month I noticed an extraordinary number of Alpine swifts about, flying with a cry quite different from the scream with which they pursue one another in spring. Certainly these were not local birds, for they are not common in Corsica. Yet they could hardly be the vanguard of the autumn migration, for early as the swift is to depart this date would surely be too early for him.

The fact, however, remains that on the following day there was not a swift to be seen; nor did I see any again till the following 4th of March. Then they were common swifts, and I was by the sea.

In the middle of the month we received the news that Peace with Turkey was signed. The end of the long period of Armistice, which had meant so much to me, had arrived.

Zonza is a famous place for blackberries, of which, *more Corsicano*, the natives make no use. Even the children were not sufficiently energetic to pick

them.[1] I need hardly say we were, and added blackberry jam to our *menu* with much delight. Indeed I think the blackberries were about the only thing connected with the place that we did regret; but I should not be ungrateful to a place which was so beneficial to my health.

In the latter part of August the weather broke, and we had some heavyish storms. The weather was distinctly autumnal after these; but we were not to be tempted to a longer stay, especially as we were threatened with the annual fair on the 8th of September. We found the village quite noisy enough without that infliction.

I saw more partridges about during the latter part of my stay than I had suspected the ground of holding. I had no gun; and anyhow the coveys frequent the *maquis*, where the chances are limited to that of a snapshot; and to find them again would be practically impossible.

I have said I had no gun. This was beginning to be a serious matter for me. I had arranged for Messrs Westley Richards to send me out a 20-bore "Fauneta," which, being a shot-and-ball gun,

[1] There is also a religious, or rather, superstitious reason. The Crown of Thorns is said to have been made from this plant.

struck me as being the best weapon for Corsica. But war regulations were scarcely relaxed in France, and it took me a long time to get a permit to land the weapon. In fact I did not get the permit till the time at which I ought to have had the gun.

We left Zonza on the 1st of September, making our next place of stay at Levie. This is a large village lying on a steep hillside, so steep in fact that its lowest houses are some three hundred feet below the highest ones. The views are very fine, extending to the river gorge nearly two thousand feet below; but there are no forests. In fact the surroundings are practically all chestnut groves, the fruit of which was just ripening to harvest. Levie is a more southern-looking village than Zonza, though not very much lower, nearly, and all the houses were, at this season, covered with grapes. Figs, too, were a standard crop, whereas at Zonza there were none. The difference may lie in the fact that Levie gets the morning sun.

Our hostelry was entitled the "Modern Hotel" (*sic*), but why the French word was not used I cannot say. At any rate there was nothing modern about the establishment except its name.

One of our first excursions from this place was

to Carbini, once a place of more importance, but now a village of a few hundred inhabitants. A finely engineered but very rough road winds down the northern slopes of the valley below Levie, but we were surprised a couple of miles down it to find it end with the abutment of an unbuilt bridge. From thence on the road is a mere mule track, but the views down the valley are magnificent. The hills are covered with *maquis*, but there are no trees.

Carbini is interesting historically as the only place in Corsica which has been connected with a religious movement. This was that of the "*Giovannali*"—a sect which appears to have been of similar nature to that of the Bogumiles of the Western Balkan, though chronologically some centuries later. Like the Hussites, they were accused of abominable orgies. Led by the brothers Polo and Arrigo, lords of Attala, the sect increased so rapidly that it soon attracted the attention of Pope Urban V., then overlord of the island. He excommunicated its members, who were by this time of sufficient importance to have erected a fortress of their own. This was taken by the Papal troops, and the *Giovannali* were massacred, to the last man, by their fellow-countrymen.

To the eastward of Carbini is a fine forest,

extending almost to the sea, and covering several high mountains, but it was too remote for me to reach it.

Indeed, the time I spent at Levie was lost time to me. I had a recrudescence of my Syrian trouble; and could only take very limited exercise.

Near so large a village there was, of course, neither animal nor bird life. All I saw was a jay or two, a pair of buzzards, one sparrow-hawk, some ravens, and a couple of coveys of red-legs.

# CHAPTER VII

## ANOTHER FOREST LODGE

We left Levie on the 1st of October, in the height of the chestnut harvest, the great one of this district. We travelled quite in the old *vetturino* style, with three lean horses abreast, clashing their bells. We had to climb the steep ascent from Sorbollano to Serra, through fine chestnut groves; and then we rolled down to Aullene, having done the twenty miles in four hours. Here we lunched (abominably); and rested the nags. After this our road ran through a barren rocky valley to the foot of, and up to, the Col de la Vaccia pass.

This is just about the same height as the Bavella pass, say, 4,000 feet. From here we went down through fine beech forests—a novelty to us in Corsica—to Zicavo; and on to the foot of the steep ascent to the forest lodge of St Antoine. Here I wanted our driver to leave the carriage, as the horses were tired with their forty-five miles journey,

but he would not listen to me, and tried to force them up the steep, bad road. Of course, after beating them most brutally he had to give it up a couple of hundred yards farther on. I never saw a more disgusting exhibition of temper, the only excuse for it being that I do not think the man was very sane—a common thing with these people.

The forest house, to which we had to have our luggage brought by hand, is beautifully situated in a fine beech forest, blending with pine on the higher slopes. The hills run up to over five thousand feet, and are covered with the finest forests we had ever seen in the island.

We should have been glad to prolong our stay here, but we were confronted with the difficulty which had now become chronic in the island—want of provisions; and had to decide to go on in a few days. Unfortunately the weather had broken; but on our first day the rain was not heavy. We were thus able to see something of these pine woods. These were certainly in better order than the other forests we had seen, and contained no domestic animals—nor indeed, within convenient reach of the forest lodge, any others. Birds were as scarce as usual; I only noted a number of missel-thrushes as uncommon.

This forest, with its rushing streams and bright green foliage, buried in clouds and mist, reminded me of some of the hill jungles of Ceylon. The resemblance was increased by the luxuriance of its creepers. I believe these were identical with the common "traveller's joy," but they were of enormous size. Several of them ascended the pines to the height of forty feet in a mass of tangled coils, most of which were, at the ground level, as thick as a man's arm. I have never seen such a sight in a temperate climate before.

The weather cleared a little on the afternoon of our second day, and with some of the little colony of Forest Guards and their families we made our way up to the Chapel of St Antoine, which gives its name to the locality. Unfortunately the heavy clouds deprived us of any view.

The next day I had occasion to go into Zicavo. It being too far to walk, I made enquiries for a horse. Eventually a dun three-year-old pony was produced. This was accoutred with an ancient demi-pique saddle. No bridle was to be had, so a halter had to serve.

The owner of the pony admitted it was "a little lame"—rheumatism he thought. My opinion was that it was very lame—from ringbone. However,

PINE FORESTS ABOVE ST. ANTOINE.

we managed the fourteen miles without mishap, which, as the only "girth" was apparently an old rein, and much too long, was rather wonderful. The—odd—stirrups had apparently been designed for an infant of tender years. I could only get a couple of inches of my toe into the right one. So altogether I was not sorry to complete my ride—the first I had had for fourteen months.

The visitors' book at this forest lodge contained no entry later than the date of August, 1913; but there was a tradition that one tourist had been here during the intervening seven years! Still the place is practically unvisited, although the most beautiful we had yet seen.

On the afternoon after my ride to Zicavo I walked up through the forest above the lodge. Before very long my dogs took up a line, and I heard them running merrily round the heights above. I waited for them some three-quarters of an hour, and then returned to the house.

Contrary to my expectations, they did not come back to the house that night, so the next day was perforce devoted to a search for them. I climbed to the *col* above the lodge from which I had a view extending to the sea breaking on the rocks to the east. A well-graded path led for miles through

the beech forest, finally coming out on the track we had followed to the chapel on the previous day. But nothing further was to be heard of the dogs.

After lunch the two cabriolets were waiting for us, and we left reluctantly and climbed slowly up to the Col de Verde. This is the wildest and loneliest part of the island. For over twenty-five miles there is no village on this road, only one or two roadmenders' cottages. The pass is nearly the height of Ben Nevis.

We were now in the famous Fium 'Orbo district, but we saw nothing of its "bandits."

Our road fell steeply through the magnificent forest of Marmano to the forest lodge of the same name. Soon after leaving this the chestnut trees began to reappear, and through groves of these we made our way to our hotel at Ghisoni.

Ghisoni lies in a fine gorge through which the Regolo, a tributary of the Fium 'Orbo, makes its way to join the latter stream a mile farther down. Opposite the village are the great cliffs which bear the strange names of the Kyrie Eleison and Christe Eleison respectively, the former rising to a height of nearly 5,000 feet.

As we were finishing dinner on the second

evening of our stay we were surprised by our hostess announcing the arrival of English guests. As these proved to be two young "War indispensables" on a holiday, we were not impressed; but it was the first time we had heard English spoken since the Man of Science quitted us three months previously. They left next morning, hoping to reach Ajaccio by going round the south of the island by motor-omnibus. A local railway strike had cancelled all their plans; however, it ended soon after they left us.

Ghisoni was the smallest Corsican village we had sojourned in; and yet it was lighted with electric light! It is thus in advance of the capital city, which, during the previous winter, had had no public light of any kind.

The reason probably is that Ghisoni is the richest *commune* of Corsica. It owns very large estates. Nor, as water-power is available, is the expense of the light a very heavy one. It is also possessed of one of the best-known little country inns in the island, whose fare was a rare treat to us after the semi-starvation of the districts to the southward. Especially did we enjoy the trout of the Fium 'Orbo, which are famous, and justly so.

The road by which we had come is not the only

one here on which there are no villages. Between Ghisoni and the railway station at Vivario (twelve miles) there is only one (a road-mender's) house. This, too, is a fine road, running through noble pine forests, and over the Col de Sorba (4,350 ft.).

The most famous road out of Ghisoni, however, is that through the defile of the Inzecca to Ghisonnaccia Station, which, although rather further than the one I have just mentioned, may be taken as that of the place, as no pass has to be crossed to get to it.

This, too, is a solitary road, though there are a few scattered houses, at long intervals, on it. The famous thing about it is the magnificent gorge through which the Fium 'Orbo flows, and above which the road has been dug out of the sheer rock.

The whole of this road—that is, from Vivario to Ghisonnaccia—is one much used for the transport of timber. On the two-wheeled mule-carts, which I have before described, immense beams of pine are balanced, and, as these are generally over forty and even fifty feet long, they sweep away the walls, which are supposed to protect the traveller from the gulf. The road may, therefore, be taken as an

unfenced one. It is very narrow in places, and the possibility of meeting a load of timber does not add to its attractions for the nervous. But the rock scenery is sublime.

Ghisoni is another district very poor in bird life. Except buzzards, ravens and jays—the invariable trio of Corsican large birds—there was nothing moving to be seen. Nor, I noticed, did any of the villagers carry guns—a pretty good proof that there was nothing to shoot at.

Twelve days after our arrival at Ghisoni I received a message from the Gendarmerie at Zicavo that the missing dogs had turned up at Cozzano, the hamlet nearest the St Antoine Forest. Three days later they were brought in—in a deplorable condition. They had been found wandering in a starving state a week after our departure, and were still only skin and bone. Nevertheless they had broken away from the boy who brought them on their long walk, and followed the line of a hare which he had crossed, till he, with some difficulty, stopped them.

I think I should like to place on record the name of the good Samaritan, to whom they were indebted for their lives. This was Pierre Cesari, an ex-gendarme. They were certainly lucky to

fall in with him, as kindness to animals, even to one's own property, is by no means a Corsican virtue.

The weather had now thoroughly broken, and we had rain most days in October. This was favourable to the chestnut harvest, now in full swing, and which I was told was an excellent one. Nevertheless chestnuts were said to be dearer than ever, an example of the shameless profiteering which goes on amongst the Corsican peasantry. ,

The chestnut crop may be looked upon as the staple one of the Corsican highlands; but it is due to the industry of the predecessors of its present owners. The bulk of the trees are of great age, although I did certainly see more young trees in the Ghisoni district than elsewhere. The men, as usual, look upon the work of harvesting the nuts as derogatory to their dignity. They are collected by the women and children, and brought in partly by them, and partly by the donkeys, of which few houses are too poor to own one. It is difficult, therefore, to discover any reason warranting an excessive price being asked.

The weather was not kind to us during the early weeks of our stay at Ghisoni—in fact heavier and more persistent rain I have rarely seen out of the

tropics. Nevertheless we managed to ramble over most of the country-side—in mackintoshes.

On one day of our walks I was inspired with the idea that I had discovered a "hut circle," like those on Dartmoor. Fortunately, before I could write to bring the Man of Science to the scene of my discovery, local criticism suggested that I might be referring to a winnowing floor, which proved to be the case. One hardly associates this sort of thing with a district where corn crops are so rare; but I came across a second one later. Once only, near Zonza, I saw the natives making use of one of such floors by the simple process of throwing scoop-fuls of corn into the air. On that occasion, too, I noticed the men were all wearing their shirts outside their trousers—the reason for which will occur to the reflective reader.

But if I made no discovery on the peak facing the village the dogs did, and signalled their convalescence by putting up, one by one, the members of a small covey of red-legs—the first I had seen here.

On the afternoon of a wild wet day—the sixth in succession—it held up sufficiently to enable us to make our way to the gorge of the Fium 'Orbo—not half a mile below its junction with the Ghisoni

stream. Although a considerable river it is, in flood-time, forced twice through rocky clefts only some three yards wide, and forms rapids and cascades not without grandeur, and buried in clouds of spray.

# CHAPTER VIII

## A TYPICAL VILLAGE

AMONG the various casual mess-mates with whom we sat down to our meals in the little hotel at Ghisoni was the local officer of Gendarmerie, then making his round of inspection. From him we were able to obtain a true account as to the "men in the *maquis*" in the Fium 'Orbo district. There are, or were at that moment, three. From the natives you never get such information. Our hostess, who had told us she had never heard of any bandits, was quite willing to discuss with this officer the fate of one of his predecessors, who, not being content to leave well alone, went after the bandits, and was promptly shot by them. A similar fate is not likely to await our young acquaintance, who was merely putting in the regulation three months with the Gendarmerie, required of all candidates for the *Garde Republicaine*, and therefore not in the least likely to make display of misplaced zeal.

St Martin's summer was kind to us, but the

Renoso range was already covered with snow—"adumbrating," to quote my old friend Clifford Cordley, "that winter," that was closing round us.

Towards the end of the month it crept lower, say, to about 3,000 feet; and whilst it made the mountains by which we were surrounded an imposing sight, it also warned us to get away from them before the snow reached our line of retreat.

I was really only waiting to hear that arrangements had been made for me to try for a stag on the plain. There was nothing to do at Ghisoni, which affords no sport, and no amusement—unless it would to members of our rock-climbing associations, who would take considerable interest in such places as the north-east face of the Christe Eleison.

Still, I must not abuse Ghisoni, as, if nothing else, I found it a healthy place, and not uninteresting scrambles on its hillsides filled up the days. From a natural history point of view they had, however, no interest at all. A few red-legs, a couple of woodcock and a fox or two, which afforded the dogs half an hour's exciting chase before seeking shelter in the rocks, were the total of the *fauna* that we observed.

Towards the end of our stay at Ghisoni an

incident occurred—trivial in itself, but instructive as showing what a truly impossible country Corsica, under present arrangements, is. To make it clear, I must go back to my departure from Egypt, when, being short of wraps, I borrowed an overcoat from a late hospital ward-mate, which garment I returned to him on receiving my own baggage at Ajaccio. Some months later he wrote to me that he had never received this parcel. So I sent him the official receipt handed to me at the time of its despatch, to enable him to obtain compensation.

In November we received notice from the parcel post office at Ajaccio that there was a parcel (which we expected) lying there for us. I employed a forwarding agent there to clear it; but to my horror, when it arrived at Ghisoni, it proved not to be the parcel that we expected, but the coat I had despatched (and paid for) to Egypt some six months before, and which had been lying in the Ajaccio office all that time!

The parcel post service in Corsica, that is, for parcels outside the island, is contracted for by the Fraissinet Steamship Company, who, I believe, also undertake that for the whole of the Mediterranean and Levant, as well as the African coast and islands of the Indian Ocean. As far, at any rate,

as Corsica is concerned, it gives universal dissatisfaction. I never received a parcel from England —two days' journey—under three months, and rarely under four. My wife had one parcel—a pair of shoes—which took exactly thirteen months. Even from Paris parcels take weeks.

This Company also holds the contract for the steamboat service from the Continent. Their wretched and miserably-managed boats are greatly responsible for the very limited tourist traffic; and yet the contract was renewed early in 1920!

I had occasion to write to the Ajaccio office of this Company half a dozen times on various matters; but I never got an answer to any of my letters. As it is a French Company, I had not expected this; but a Corsican practically *never* answers a letter.

If you write to him at some length and very plainly, you may, or may not, get a reply a week or two later in the shape of a message delivered by an acquaintance of your correspondent (? save the mark). But the odds are that the message will be a reply to a quite minor point in your letter. Moreover, as the messenger is selected quite at random (anybody who says he may be going your way will do) the odds are he will vary his plans or his route,

and you get no answer at all. I have been driven to the verge of frenzy by this trick, when all our plans were hanging on our being able to get accommodation at a certain place, and we were kept waiting week after week for an answer. This was the case during our last month or so at Ghisoni. To all my letters as to accommodation, and as to the chances of a stag in the low country, I could only get a message that they would try and arrange rooms for us.

At last I decided that I must go myself and see about it.

Having failed to get a cabriolet for myself I was thrown back on the post cart, which leaves Ghisoni at an early hour. I found the driver engaged in tying his pony in with fragments of rope, so I was glad to walk on, and to try to get a little warmth into my limbs, for the frost was shrewd.

Two or three kilometres on the vehicle overtook me. My only fellow-passenger was a lively little Alsacienne—or to speak by the card, a Lorrainese—who entertained me with descriptions of the life of a French girl under the German *régime*.

I had now to traverse the famous *defilé de l'Inzecca*. As with most other things of which one hears so much I was disappointed. I thought it

compared unfavourably with the Windyates of Derbyshire.

The road was in an infamous condition; and it took us some three and a half hours to descend the fourteen miles, or rather less.

A railway station was a novelty to me, but I had little time to study it. No vehicle was available, so I shouldered my *rucksack*, and made my way to Ghisonnaccia village, rather over three miles. Here I was expected, and found an excellent *déjeuner* awaiting me. Unfortunately the man of the house was absent; and all I could do was to say I hoped to find him at home on the following day. Here again there was a difficulty as to conveyance. The only available mule was in the *maquis*, and had to be found. I waited for some hours till at last, fortunately, a cabriolet belonging to an hotel-keeper, and conveying wine, passed, and was commandeered by my hostess. We soon left the high road, and blundered up the valley of the Abbatesco in the gathering darkness. The mule, I think, had a sore shoulder—they generally have in Corsica—and it was the off one. Consequently the heavily-laden vehicle kept swerving towards the unprotected side of the road, many feet below which I could see the white water rushing.

WILD CORSICA.

The road got worse and worse—far the worst I had yet seen in the island; and at last I left the vehicle, and stumbled along in front of it. It was now pitch dark, and when I saw the road next day I failed to understand how I had not broken a limb.

This is the very heart of the "bandits" country, but the only thing I met was a mounted patrol of gendarmerie, who never saw me at all. Indeed, I do not think I should have seen them but for their glowing cigarettes!

At last I got a strong whiff of sulphur, and guessed I must be close to the baths of Pietrapola. A good dinner and a comfortable bed made a satisfactory finish to a hard day.

Pietrapola is very much "wild Corsica" still, though locally it has a reputation for some marvellous cures. The waters are sulphurous, and very hot. When—if ever, some people would say—the railway is carried on from Ghisonnaccia, where railhead has been in the *maquis* for a good many years now, the baths will be more accessible, if a decent road up the hill is made. Meanwhile I believe we can claim credit for having been the first Britishers to visit them, but an American, if only on business, had preceded us by some weeks.

For the rest the hamlet lies in a loop of the stream, and is surrounded by hills. Isolaccia, the chief village of the parish, looks down on one from five miles away.

However, I was more concerned with the material than with the picturesque on this occasion; and, having ascertained that fair accommodation was to be had in the hotel, I decided to return later, and once more committed myself to a cabriolet. Down the hill we bumped, therefore, at a more satisfactory rate, and arrived at Ghisonnaccia in a howling gale.

The low country along this road is well-farmed, and quite un-Corsican looking. The cattle which I saw ploughing and drawing wagons are of a fine, large breed. Unfortunately it is all very unhealthy in summer, in spite of the frequent eucalyptus trees.

The man I had been recommended to was at home this time, but he had very little hope to give me of getting a stag. They had bagged a fine one a month before. I soon found that, unfortunately, there was no question of stalking. If I came to Pietrapola they would let me know when a drive could be arranged. So I said I would come.

A friendly sportsman, who had shared my table at lunch, drove me to the station behind what he

claimed to be an English thoroughbred. Anyhow, it had a very pretty idea of bowling a trap along. I found the post cart—and my companion of the previous day—waiting, and did the journey back to Ghisoni in five hours. I walked about half the way, and shivered the rest; for driving rain, which was snow very little higher up, came with the bitter wind. For pure discomfort in travelling commend me to a Corsican post-cart in winter!

I found there had been a little snow in Ghisoni itself; but next morning the hills round it were white to within a very few hundred feet above the village.

It was high time to seek a somewhat lower level, and this we decided to do a few days later.

# CHAPTER IX

## A CORSICAN WATERING PLACE

On our drive down from Ghisoni we had a practical illustration of the fact that the legendary dangers of the Inzecca defile were not all imaginary, for, when we reached a point not a hundred yards from the most sheer and unprotected precipice, we found our road completely blocked by a fall of rock. It could not have occurred an hour previously, as we had met a returning timber carriage not very long before.

The rock which barred the road was as large as a small dining-table; but our drivers, with the help of a third man who arrived a few minutes later from the opposite direction, were able to remove the smaller rocks which had accompanied it so as to lead their vehicles round.

Certainly the idea of receiving a fall of this nature on one's conveyance was not exhilarating—nor, indeed, that of a mule bolting at the sound of such a thing just behind, having regard to the road in

front. However, we had escaped; and arrived safely at Pietrapola during the afternoon.

This hamlet was the smallest place we had visited in the island. It consists practically of the *Etablissement des Bains*, with an hotel and a few houses huddled closely round these. The resident population is trifling, and lives by the baths, or rather on the bathers.

The waters have been known since Roman days, and are of great efficacy for gout, rheumatism, and other ailments. If the place were a little more accessible, and rather more civilised, it would probably have a large *clientèle*. As it is few but Corsicans visit it; and I believe we were the first English people to try the baths.

The *établissement* contains some dozen baths, and also a few bedrooms; but as the latter have no fireplaces few people go there in winter. There is also a restaurant.

At the time of our visit there was only one inmate under treatment, and his complaint was not an uncommon one in Corsica—a bullet-wound. As usual, people were reticent about the circumstances under which he had been shot some months before. I learnt, however, that he was the father of a well-known bandit who had been "in the *maquis*" for

years. It was, therefore, not difficult to understand that his bullet came from the gun of some member of the family of one of his son's victims.

This son seems to be a well-known personage, and fairly prosperous, as he has no less than *three* wives in different places! (The reader will understand that there might be difficulties about his attending at a *Mairie* for a formal wedding ceremony.) I was also told that he has a daughter at school at Bastia, so he seems to be a good father. I should very much doubt if he ever finds it necessary to pass a night in the open.

The weather was not kind to us during the first part of our stay. It rained nearly every day, and generally most of the day. It even snowed, which, at under five hundred feet, is unusual. The hills above us were all, of course, covered.

I heard a story here of a curious case of presentiment. A young man of the district had returned from military service, and had purchased an *appartement* on the ground floor in a house quite near our hotel, but he had not occupied it. One night he dreamt that he met a friend, who had been killed in the war, and who warned him against living in his new house, proceeding afterwards to attach a quantity of rags to the door. On waking,

he related his dream; but I believe it did not influence his intentions. It may, however, have delayed their execution.

About a week before Christmas the floor of the top room of his new abode fell, bringing with it the whole first floor into his quarters. Fortunately all three rooms were at the moment unoccupied. The dream of a warning, under the circumstances, was curious.

In Christmas week the weather improved, and on the 22nd of December I made up my mind to try and find a boar after lunch. I succeeded only too well.

I crossed the Abbatesco, and made my way to the dense *maquis* on the right bank. I must have almost walked on to the brute, for the dogs took up the line a few yards in front of me, and drove him merrily up and along the hill. Then he turned down towards the stream, and in a minute I heard them baying the animal. The bush was intensely thick, and I arrived on the scene too late. My poor brave little hounds were cut to ribbons.

"Druid" had his off foreleg almost severed, besides a deep hole in the hock, and a cut under the flank. "Dido" had apparently been caught in retreat. Her tail was nearly cut off, but this had

partly saved her. Still she had a deep hole in the lower abdomen. Luckily it had not injured anything vital.

Carrying the dogs I made my way homewards. Fortunately it was not much more than a mile away.

This was a grievous beginning to Corsican sport. I blamed myself bitterly for allowing untried dogs to go to a boar in country where I could give them no aid. I had relied on their activity to escape attack, but poor "Druid" had tried to seize the brute and had suffered in consequence.

On the three following evenings I attempted to get my revenge on the author of the mischief. But lying in wait for a boar is rarely effective, unless it is on his route to some crop he has previously visited. Without local knowledge I could only post myself at random, and as there were tens of thousands of acres of *maquis* adjoining the place, there was of course no reason why he should show there. Nor could I persuade any of the local gunners to organise a drive. Pietrapola swarms with pig—fifty have been seen together.

We were an odd party that lovely Christmas day—two Americans, one Porto Rican, a French-woman with her Corsican husband, and ourselves. In the old magazines it used to be the fashion for

"DRUID" AND "DIDO."

such a party to take turns to tell stories round the fire. Some were told on this occasion, but I do not recall any worth repetition here. One, I may say, can be found in the last chapter of "The Image of War,"[1] but it was not I who told it this time.

Towards the end of the year I had the unpleasant experience of being lost in the *maquis*. "Lost" is perhaps not exactly the word, as I knew exactly whereabouts I was, and indeed could see the high-road, often within a hundred yards of me; but from that I was cut off by the river.

I had gone out towards dusk to wait for a possible boar, and had descended the right bank of the stream farther than I had previously attempted to go. When it became too dark to see the sights on my "Fauneta" I started for my temporary quarters.

After walking—perhaps blundering along in the dark would be a better way of putting it—for some time, I came out on a grassy flat, studded with thorn bushes of a particularly aggressive nature, with every one of which I seemed to collide. Here I made the mistake of thinking that I had reached a spot I knew, but which was really a good deal farther on, and turned to the left. In a short time

[1] Blackwood's, 1914.

I realised that I had absolutely lost the track. It was then about five o'clock. I walked, or stumbled, about a bit of ground, not, I should say, over twenty acres in extent, for four hours; but whenever I hit on anything at all like a path it invariably ended in high, dense and dripping bush, or in rocks. My only guide was, as I have hinted, the river on my right; but the banks were steep cliffs and the stream deep. I tried working back to remedy my original mistake, but this, too, failed. At intervals I came on animals, which I could generally only hear, but which were probably only cattle. Up on the hill foxes were quarrelling and barking.

At last, soon after nine, the moon rose. I had, of course, reckoned on this when I started that evening. At first it was obscured by clouds, but soon got bright, too bright, indeed, for it gave a false light which made the grass look like paths.

Presently I saw an animal. Was I to have a chance to make up for the night's misadventures? I shoved in cartridges, and walked towards it. Surely a boar would not await human approach so quietly? Of course it turned out to be a small calf.

Nevertheless I still made no progress, and a night in the bush began to be at worst a possibility. I stopped to reflect. My track, I remembered, ran

at one place close to the riverine cliff. Therefore I must try and cut it there. I had not dared to do this in the pitch dark.

I made one cut at right angles to the river—a failure. I extricated myself from a labyrinth of boulders, and made another, farther north.

This time I hit a possible way across rough rocks, the river brawling on my right. I was able to get along, but surely the track had not been so rough as this? Still I kept on. The track improved until I saw a heap of chips I had noticed in coming out. I was saved!

My troubles were not quite over. This track came out on the grassy, thorn-studded flat I had originally taken the other one for, and I had to leave it by a boulder-strewn bank to hit off what was at best a mere goat-track. But I managed it. I had still to tackle nearly a mile of very difficult going, partly water-courses running through high bush; but this I knew, more or less, for I had carried poor "Druid" over it less than a week before.

Still, it had its difficulties. I fell twice, and damaged myself somewhat, but I got to the bridge and high-road at last. At ten o'clock I reached the hotel, having been out seven hours and a half, during only one of which I had been standing still.

I must have covered sixteen or seventeen miles to go about two!

So ended 1920. Poor "Druid's" largest wound was healing nicely, but he was still on three legs from the hole in the hock, and I feared the tendon might be permanently damaged. "Dido" had practically recovered; but it had been impossible to save her tail, and I had had to complete the boar's work with my hunting knife, leaving her a very odd-looking hound indeed.

# CHAPTER X

## THE MIGHTY BOAR

TOWARDS the end of the month a wandering Englishman, "H.H.," turned up at Pietrapola. We had various attempts to find sport, including a visit to the big farm of Migliacciaro, five miles down the valley, where, however, we only found, and killed, one woodcock and a brace of partridges.

We also had a couple of drives for boar. On each occasion these were present, but nobody got a shot. This was hardly good enough, so we decided to move on to the Government Farm at Casabianda. Formerly this was a penal establishment, but it proved too unhealthy, and has long since been abandoned as such.

The surroundings are delightful. The buildings stand in a pleasant park, round which is highly cultivated arable, and a large extent of cistus cover. The outer fringe of the estate consists of dense *maquis*.

There was certainly more game here, and plenty of duck, but these last were difficult of approach, mostly lying out on the big swamps, and in fine weather out at sea.

It is a pity this country should be a hot-bed of fever, for the sporting facilities are very great. The views, too, over the Tyrrhenian Sea on one hand, and the snow-covered mountains on the other, are magnificent.

Our " post-town " here was Aléria. This is the most ancient place in Corsica, and, like Casabianda, it lies on a knoll about 150 feet above the sea. It was a Phœnician colony, and later the Roman capital of the island, but the few remains—of a palace and an amphitheatre—are not recognisable, except possibly by an expert.

Aléria, said to have had 100,000 inhabitants, was totally destroyed by the Saracens, but it contains an old fort, predating the Spanish Armada, and some dozen of the high houses of the district. Below it, where the main road crosses the river, is a similar village, Cateraggio, with a quaint mediaeval tower, one of the few to be seen in the island.

In company with " H.H." I had various days after duck and snipe here with varying success.

The greatest difficulty was to retrieve the birds, which always fell in the river or ponds, if this was at all possible. A good water-spaniel is a necessity here, but to this matter I will allude later.

The whole of this country swarms with wild boar, and we found it was the custom of the place to have a hunt every Sunday—in theory. They had had one the day before we arrived, and killed two. The next Sunday was wet; but we started off after lunch in a wagonette and pair, surrounded by dogs of all colours and shapes. We drove to the Lagoon d'Urbino, on the shores of which we had a long wait in a cold wind and driving rain—to see nothing. The manager of the estate, M. Martinetti, wounded a pig, which was lost in the gathering darkness.

On the two following Sundays there was no sport, for various reasons—an inspection of the estate was one, I remember. Two boars were shot, nevertheless, but this was by waiting for them in the moonlight. Finally we had an afternoon hunt following a wet night, as hereafter described.

This plain certainly affords the best sport with pig in Corsica, and it could be followed on horseback. There are, however, a number of barbed wire fences. It is much more pleasant, too, not

to have to climb rocky hills on these occasions. The hounds, of course, are trencher-fed, and very poorly fed, but they are not expected to follow their game far.

The day after our first try for boar here we went to Vadina, the adjoining estate, by permission of M. Gavini's agent. We had collected a small bag of waterfowl and were coming home when I suggested to "H.H." that we should walk over a belt of low cistus cover on the chance of a woodcock.

I had come out on the estate road, as we were now in full view of the house, when "H.H." walked right on to a big boar, and saluted him with a charge of No. 7 shot, shouting out to me at the same time. Before I could slip a ball-cartridge in, the boar—a very fine one—broke across the road with the three dogs all round him. I should hardly have dared to shoot if I had been loaded. They ran him for some time, but of course he knew better than to come back again.

The dogs however did. They went back to where they had found him, and aroused a second pig, which went off in the opposite direction.

My great object in coming down here was to try and get a stag, a Corsican red deer having been

rarely, if ever, shot by an Englishman.[1] It was cheering, therefore, to hear from the guard in charge that he had seen two the morning before. I told him I would give a handsome reward if I could get one, and he promised to keep me posted as to their movements.

I had the opportunity, on a later occasion, of examining two skins, with the heads attached, of these deer. These were the property of the family of the late M. Romani of Ghisonnaccia, who for years had practically all the shooting of this district in his hands.

As I expected, they proved to be of the Algerian race, lacking the *bez* tine. One was evidently an old stag, the other younger. Roughly, they were similar to the heads of the Japanese deer in size, and rarely, I imagine, show more points than the eight of these deer.

Of their size it is a little difficult to form an estimate from dried skins, but I should think they do not often attain that of a good fallow-buck.

These trophies had, of course, been obtained in the usual way here, with a number of beaters and dogs, many guns being ported. Also it is probable

[1] I am sorry to say I heard of some who shot a hind and calf.

that they were killed with buck-shot. Any form of stalking is unknown here, and I think the only possible chance would be along the edges of the clearings at daybreak. Nevertheless the shepherds seem to see them fairly frequently.

Unfortunately the herd is a small one, not over fifty, as far as I could learn, and the forest is vast and impenetrable.

The very extent of our shooting here was a difficulty to us. Casabianda is quite five thousand acres, Vadina I should say as much, besides which there are miles and miles of scrub and marsh available. I can hardly conceive any place more suited to the sportsman—who does not mind roughing it a bit, *bien entendu*. But there are various essentials; first and foremost comes a good dog who will retrieve: secondly I think a collapsible boat would be very desirable, as the duck mostly lie all day on the big lagoons, of which there are three. It is true a few spend the day on the ponds and streams, but a good deal of walking is involved for a limited result. Thirdly, one wants a congenial companion, if only for the reason that the best results with duck would be obtained by two guns, one afloat and the other on the shore.

The coverts are so vast that the shooting of boar

cannot be reduced to a certainty without some half a dozen guns. But I think a great deal could be done with a shooting pony and a few couple of good dogs. Both of these should be obtainable locally. Most of the big curs one sees about seem anxious and willing to hunt pig, and their price should not be high.

When we were at Casabianda the snipe were not there—not in any numbers—but at times I am assured there are an extraordinary number on the ground. Of woodcock, too, there were very few about. I fancy one would get these on migration; a remark which applies also to quail. We saw green and golden plover, but not often; herons and a few other waders; many hawks of different kinds and sizes, and any quantities of small birds. This alluvial plain differs in this respect from all other parts of Corsica I had seen; it is a paradise for birds.

The following is a list of the game birds and water-fowl we saw here during the first fortnight of our stay:

Pheasant (rare)
Red-legged Partridge
Quail
Woodcock
Snipe
Widgeon
Norfolk Plover
Mallard
Teal
Oystercatcher
Curlew
Whimbrel
Coot

| | |
|---|---|
| Jack Snipe | Golden Plover |
| Wood-pigeon | Green Plover |
| Blue Rock | Sandpiper |
| Little Bustard (rare) | Heron |

Of hawks there were many, kites (black), one of which I saw make several determined stoops at a pigeon; buzzards, sparrow-hawks and kestrels.

Animals were very sparsely represented. I only saw wild-boar and hares, the latter not common. One day my dogs found a hedgehog. The commonest reptile here, except the lizards, is the land-tortoise, but there are a good many snakes about.

"*Non est inquirendum unde venit venison*," said Friar Tuck, but I own I felt rather sore when I saw a piece served at dinner here, and learnt that it came from a fine stag which had been illegitimately slain by a lad, near Ghisonnaccia. Of course he had no licence; few except Englishmen are foolish enough to pay for these in Corsica.

Meanwhile no further deer were reported as having been seen at Vadina. The *garde* suggested we should have a try, nevertheless; and one fine morning I drove down there, and we tackled the forest.

Seen at a little distance this part of the ground bears considerable resemblance to a Highland

forest in its more level parts. But when one gets on it one finds that the whole expanse is covered with scrub, heath, myrtle, cistus, and other bushes, nowhere much less than waist-high, and often above one's head. It is obvious, therefore, that the deer can lie anywhere unseen. We had with us four dogs which proved to have very decided ideas on the subject of hunting, though to look at they were a very scratch lot indeed. These worked round us whilst we toiled through the cover, the ground being a mass of loose stones. Our way lay up a broad strath, and we had not gone very far when we came upon the fresh tracks of deer—apparently two stags. But we saw nothing.

At last, when we had got nearly to the boundary of the estate in this direction, the pack opened. The quarry proved to be a small pig, which came directly towards us, and was missed by the *garde* at short range.

After an interval for lunch we went on. The winter sun was hot, and the continual wading through coyert most tiring, especially when we had to cross a tract that had been burnt a couple of years before.

We now came down to a valley with a trickling stream at the bottom, which looked likely ground.

But as we struck it the dogs found again, and another diminutive boar hurtled straight at my companion, who, however, failed to stop it, though it actually touched his leg! I expect it was wounded, for a tremendous hunt followed, with the result that no more chances of deer could be hoped for. Indeed we came across the fresh tracks of some that were hastily changing ground.

So the first day was a blank.

The next time I went to Vadina I was told that three stags had been seen that morning. But before we could come to any decision as to plans, three wandering gunners from Vezzani turned up, and we decided to have a beat for pigs instead, towards the lagoon. They had some dogs with them, two of which bore fresh scars, the result of a tussle with a boar five days before.

The start had been a late one, so we ate our *déjeuner* before leaving, and it was half an hour after noon before we were at our posts. Mine was ideal, a grassy flat with thorn-bushes, in front of which ran a wet ditch. The day was, as usual, a lovely one; the view over the snow-clad mountains to my left magnificent.

It was not very long before I heard the dogs, and almost directly afterwards shouts of "*Attenti!*"

from the man with them. Immediately after that I heard a plunge into the ditch in front, and a boar broke across the flat. My first barrel did not stop him altogether; but he turned his toes up to the second. There was also a fox, which was not fired at, in the beat.

Unfortunately it was not the big boar "H.H." had "saluted" almost on the same ground some time before, but a good three-year-old, very fat, and, as the event proved, excellent eating.

It took a long time to collect the hounds, and finally it was decided not to try again. The boar was carried to the cottage where we had a most elaborate *curée*, and our Vezzani acquaintances departed, each carrying, in accordance with Corsican custom, a large piece of the animal on a stick to show all they met that a boar had been slain.

Three days later I went out with the "Casabianda Hunt" in the afternoon, to some *maquis* within a couple of miles. Almost at once I got a chance at a fine boar, and missed him clean!

Later on another was fired at thrice; and finally a third took five barrels—but *not* their contents—and went away unscathed. After this, my own miss passed almost unnoticed. They were both fine boars, I was told.

On this occasion I noted the "horn" used by the huntsman of the nondescript pack of some five couple that found our game. It was simply a large conch-shell. Like old Triton, he "wound his wreathéd horn" lustily, when the hounds opened.

. . . . . .

On a previous page I quoted, from a Corsican newspaper, a somewhat fanciful account of a moufflon.

I cannot better close this chapter than by the following description of a boar-hunt, which I take from the *Petit Marseillais*.

At the same time my Corsican experiences point to the fact that the boar of that island rarely turns to bay—in the case related elsewhere he only had to deal with two very small and rash dogs—the injuries which we so often see the marks, being inflicted rather in his headlong rush through the pack. Apart from this detail the sub-joined article applies equally to the island pig; and it is extraordinarily accurate and well written. It may be said to do with the pen what Snyders has already done with the brush, for the chase of the "mighty boar."

This is the article:

## *Le Solitaire*

" La forêt est immense et immobile. Les grands chênes, où les premiers bourgeons commencent à peine à paraître, dominent de leur énorme ramure les bouquets de yeuses et les tailles de genévriers. Au fond de la gorge, au sein d'un massif de buis épais, dans leur ombre fraîche et humide, le grand solitaire dort son sommeil paisible de bête repue.

Il a " viandé " toute la nuit dans les champs et les vergers, au long de la Durance ; fouillant de son boutoir solide le sol meuble des cultures, il s'est gavé de pommes de terre, de betteraves, D'oignons acides et sucrés.

En fourrageant en bordure du bois de chênes pour voir s'il ne trouverait pas une truffe delectable, il a découvert dans la lumière d'argent du clair de lune, une " rabouillère " où une mère lapine avait soigneusement caché ses petits nouveau-nés.

Les petits lapins étaient tendres et chauds. Il les a mangés avec un grognement de plaisir voluptueux, puis il est rentré au bois, car l'aurore s'annonçait.

Il a (" souillé ") dans le lit glaiseux de la

source forestière. Il s'est délicieusement roulé dans la boue jaune qui colle et qui tient frais, en grognant de joie et en buvant l'eau bourbeuse.

Il est allé se frotter ensuite au pied du vieux chêne où tous les sangliers de la région viennent se gratter de temps immémorial et qu'ils ont si bien poli, usé et aminci au contact de leurs rudes soies brunes.

Puis il s'est retiré dans son fort et maintenant il dort, digérant son repas de la nuit, les betteraves, les pommes de terre, les truffes, les oignons et les petits lapins. Il dort et il rêve qu'il rencontra, dans un sillon, un nid de perdreaux et qu'il dévore les œufs à moitié couvés pendant que la mère crie et s'agite en vain autour de son boutoir frémissant de plaisir.

A ce doux rêve, la rude peau qui couvre sa face se plisse et ses grandes écoutes noires s'agitent joyeusement. . . .

Tout d'un coup, le voici dressé d'un bond sur ses pieds fourchins. Le groin tendu, la mâchoire à demi ouverte, les oreilles fixes et pointées, son petit œil étincelant, il écoute de toute son attention.

Au bas de la gorge, du côté de la source ou il a bu ce matin, un aboi de chien vient de s'elever.

C'est un long cri, sonore et grave, puissant comme le son d'un vieil oliphant. Il vibre dans l'air du matin, prolongé et monotone, sans aucune modulation.

Le solitaire grogne, envoie un coup de boutoir dans un jeune pied de genièvre que ses défenses arrachent et projettent en l'air.

De nouveau, l'aboir retentit, encore plus grave, plus triste, plus chaud, plus prolongé. Il part toujours de là-bas, de la source, sous les noisetiers.

Le solitaire se recouche en grognant et semble se rendormir.

Mais il écoute intensément la gorge. Elle répercute le cri lugubre qui roule dans le brouillard du matin, s'accroche aux branches des chênes, rebondit le long des rochers, court sur les étendues de lavande et de thym, vient s'étouffer dans les forêts de yeuses et dans les ronciers qui, pêle-mêle avec les houx et les buis, emplissent le fond de la gorge.

Le chien a été lâché, car sa voix se déplace.

Les aboiements, d'abord très espacés l'un de l'autre, paraissent se précipiter. Ils sont maintenant modulés en sourds trémolos. Tantôt, ils semblent plus lointains; tantôt, plus rapprochés, suivant qu'ils sont lancés en deçà ou au dela crête boisée.

Le vieux solitaire suit de l'œil le chemin que parcourt le chien. Il lui semble bien que c'est sur sa voie nocturne que son ennemi est lancé. La prudence lui conseillerait de se lever et de s'enfuir; mais il a bien bu et beaucoup mangé cette nuit, sa bauge est fraîche et humide, le soleil maintenant a dispersé les vapeurs du matin et doit échauffer les crêtes qu'il ensoleille.

Le grand sanglier se retourne en grognant; qu'importe que l'on vienne à lui. Il est bien où il est. Il est solide, vigoureux et fort; ses défenses sont longues et aiguisées comme des lames de poignards. D'un coup de boutoir, il enverra rouler loin de lui, éventré et sanglant, le chien assez téméraire pour l'attaquer.

Mais voici que d'autres voix sonores se joignent à la première: d'autres chiens sont sur sa trace. Les aboiements roulent maintenant de façon presque continue; ils se

rapprochent. Il serait peut-être sage d'éviter le combat et de fuir.

A regret, le solitaire se lève de sa bauge, écoute encore ses ennemis qui se rapprochent, tous ses poils rudement se hérissent, puis il couche les oreilles et s'en va, noblement, au trot, en dodelinant de la tête.

Il grimpe la colline, trottant, grognant, soufflant; il s'arrête parfois pour écouter la voix de la meute qui monte maintenant du fond de la combe, toujours plus chaude, toujours plus pressée.

Un moment, les aboiements se taisent. La forêt semble rendue tout à coup à l'immobilité et au sommeil. Le silence paraît plus grand parce qu'il est plus soudain.

Le solitaire se hérisse, tend son boutoir, pointe ses oreilles. Que va-t-il se passer?

Quelques secondes se silence encore et, tout d'un coup, sonores, joyeuses et folles, vibrantes et éclatantes comme des fanfares, les voix des chiens reprennent toutes à la fois avec un entrain nouveau et font rage.

Ils sont arrivés à la bauge que le solitaire vient de quitter; ils sont partis sur la voie fraîche; la chasse est lancée!

Le vallon tout entier retentit et résonne; les flancs des coteaux boisés se renvoient en cascade les hurlements et les aboiements du sauvage concert.

Basse et profonde, la voix du vieux limier domine l'ensemble, où la chanson plus aigue des chiennes perce par moment.

Le grand vieux sanglier bondit en avant et, dans un fracas de branches brisées, fonce à travers bois, écrasant les buis et les genièvres, les yeuses et les épines, les ronces et les noisetiers.

Sur la trace, à toute allure, donnant de la voix à pleine gorge, la chasse dévale, monte, descend, fonce, bondit.

De rochers en fourrés, de clairières en taillis, de bois en plaines, par les combes et par les crêtes, par les frais vallons ombreux et par les cimes dénudées et ensoleillées des collines, le solitaire va grand train. Son pied fourchu s'accroche aux rochers escarpés, s'enfonce dans la boue des bas-fonds et des souilles.

Il grogne, souffle, renifle, se jette au plus profond des tailles les plus impénétrables, revient sur ses pas, coupe sa voie, traverse les

ruisseaux et les mares ; mais, toujours, la meute est sur sa trace.

Si, parfois, les voix se taisent un instant, c'est pour que, bientôt, la basse grave du limier éclate et que toutes les autres voix reprennent en chœur avec elle la rude et chaude chanson des chiens en pleine chasse.

Le vieux solitaire se sent lassé. Sa ventrée de la nuit et la copieuse quantité d'eau qu'il a bue en rentrant en forêt l'alourdissent.

D'ailleurs, il n'a plus envie de fuir devant ces ennemis, qui hurlent sur sa trace.

Il plonge dans une combe où il sait trouver le tronc d'un vieux chêne mort, au milieu d'une clairière étroite, et nette.

Il arrive à la souche desséchée et ferme comme un roc. Il aiguise ses défenses à la rugueuse écorce, s'accule à l'arbre et attend, les soies hérissées, l'œil injecté de sang.

De tout temps, ses pareils, solidement armés comme lui, courageux et rudes jouteurs, grands vieux sangliers à l'humeur farouche et morose, ont lutté ainsi, adossés à un chêne, face à la meute hurlante des chiens.

Dans nos montagnes, dans nos bois hantés par les grands solitaires, les chasses des

Volsques, des Romains, des Ligures, des Maures et des Francs ont roulé leurs bruyantes fanfares, et les chiens, de tout temps, ont avec le même courage et la même ténacité, hurle au poil des sangliers farouches.

Au pied de ce vieux chêne, si commode pour s'en faire un abri, combien de grands vieux sangliers, de ragots ou de bêtes rousses, de laies ou de solitaires ont-ils dû s'appuyer pour faire face et lutter courageusement et loyalement, crocs contre défenses, le nombre contre la force, à poids divers, à armures diverses, mais à courage égal, jusqu'à ce qu'un épieu ou un couteau tendu par un homme vienne mettre fin à la terrible bataille, ou que le sanglier, d'un grand coup de boutoir, dans un élan superbe, bousculant les chiens cramponnés à ses oreilles et tout saignants de leurs blessures et des siennes, n'envoie rouler au sol le chasseur courageux et téméraire.

Mais voici le meute qui débouche et va se jeter sur lui, comme la tradition qu'il a reçue de ses pères le lui a appris. Il se carre, prêt a recevoir le choc de la meute hurlante, il s'apprête à frapper du boutoir l'ennemi qui le charge, car c'est sa façon à lui de combattre,

et, vieux sanglier, il n'a pas dégénéré du courage de ses ancêtres. Le combat séculaire se déroule avec la violence et la fougue de toujours.

Les chiens, jaillissant hors du taillis, du même élan se jettent sur lui. Une mâchoire claque et se referme, emprisonnant son oreille droite; mais d'un coup de boutoir, il a éventré et envoyé à six pas l'assailant, qui se précipitait sur son écoute gauche. Le grand griffon gît maintenant, le ventre ouvert et ses membres, dressés vers le ciel, s'agitent en saccades.

La meute marqueun instant d'arrêt; les voix montent de nouveau en longs hurlements, chantant la défense au ferme, la bataille à mort, le noble tumulte du combat.

Les vallons, les colles, les rochers, les montagnes reprennent en échos ce chant de guerre qu'ils connaissent si bien et qui les éveille depuis de si longs temps.

La montagne, les chiens semblent rajeunir de vingt siècles, car la chanson de bataille des chiens est immuable comme leur ardeur et le courage de leur ennemi. C'est les mêmes aboiements que les arbres et les roches ont entendus lorsque les guerriers volsques ou les

légionnaires romains poursuivaient à l'épieu les solitaires énormes.

Le muete se jette à nouveau sur le fauvre. Celuici fonce a coups de boutoir dans la troupe grouillante et hurlante autour de lui.

Il se bat terriblement, mais en silence, l'œil étincelant sous la rude soie qui le couvre.

Un morceau d'entrailles pend à ses défenses. Un griffon tricolore hurle, l'épaule arrachée. Un autre, silencieux et farouche, lape le sang qui jaillit de sa poitrine. Une chienne gémit, le flanc perforé comme un poignard.

Le cerle s'élargit autour du solitaire qui grogne sourdement.

Mais voici l'homme qui paraît.

Les chênes et les yeuses frémissent, car ils ont vu les vieux guerriers s'élancer, le fer au poing, sur le solitaire acculé. Ils connaissent le geste courageux et final.

Le vieux sanglier aussi sait ce qu'il doit faire. L'homme le domine de sa taille, mais il n'en a nulle peur et se carre, prêt à frapper cet adversaire nouveau comme les autres.

Mais une détonation a retenti.

Le vieux sanglier, surpris, sent un choc à sa poitrine. Le sang jaillit; il s'étouffe,

s'agenouille et s'affaisse en écrasant un chien, tandis que la meute se précipite sur lui. Il tombe, vaincu, et ses petits yeux de braise, qui s'éteignent, contemplent avec rage, stupeur et mépris cet homme nouveau qui frappe de loin."

JEAN-TOUSSAINT SAMAT.

(Translation) *The Solitary*[1] *Boar*

The forest is vast and motionless. The great oaks, whose first buds have hardly commenced to show yet, dominate the groups of beeches and the clumps of juniper, with their branches. At the bottom of the gorge, in the heart of a dense mass of box, and in its fresh, damp shade, the Solitary sleeps the peaceful slumber of a well-fed animal.

He has grazed all night in the fields and meadows lying along the Durance. Turning the soft soil of the arable with his strong muzzle, he has stuffed himself with potatoes, beetroot, and with sour and sweet onions.

Foraging along the edge of an oak wood in the hope of discovering a delicious truffle, he came across a freshly "drawn" bury, where a mother-rabbit had carefully hidden her newly born litter.

[1] As used here the word *solitaire* is really untranslatable. In other countries it is applied equally to old chamois bucks. See the author's "The Image of War," *passim*.

The baby rabbits were warm and tender. He ate them with a grunt of voluptuous satisfaction, after which he returned to the covert, for dawn was at hand.

In the muddy bed of a forest spring he "soiled." Delectably he rolled in the yellow, cool, and adhesive clay, grunting with pleasure, and drinking the muddy water.

After this, he went on to rub himself at the base of the old oak, where all the wild boar of the district have come to do the same thing from time immemorial, with the result that they have polished it, and worn off its bark, with their harsh brown bristles.

Then he went on to his stronghold; and now he sleeps, digesting his last night's meal—beetroot, potatoes, truffles, onions, and baby rabbits alike. He sleeps; and dreams that he finds in a furrow a partridge's nest, the half-hatched eggs from which he devours, whilst the mother-bird cries and flutters in vain round his muzzle, which trembles with delight. This sweet dream makes the hard skin of his face wrinkle, and his great black ears move joyously.

Suddenly he bounds to his hooved feet. He listens intently, his neck stiffened, his jaws half

open, his ears fixed and pointed, and his little eyes sparkling.

From the bottom of the gorge, from the side of the spring where he drank this morning, the note of a hound has just resounded.

It was a long note, sonorous and deep, penetrating as that of an ancient horn. Prolonged and monotonous, without any variation, it vibrates on the morning air.

The Solitary grunts; and gives a blow with his muzzle to a young juniper bush, which his tusks up-root, and send flying into the air.

Once more the note resounds—deeper, more menacing, keener and more drawn-out. But it still comes from down below, from the spring under the hazels.

The Solitary lies down again; and appears to go to sleep once more.

He is nevertheless listening intently to the sounds in the gorge below. That melancholy note echoes therein through the morning mist; hangs on the branches of the oaks; rebounds along the rocks; runs over the thyme and lavender-covered open spaces; and dies away midst the beech-woods, and in the rushes, which, mixed indiscriminately with holly and box, fill up the bottom of the gorge.

The hound must have been released, for his note resounds from a different place.

His music, which was at first audible at long intervals, becomes continuous. It is now modified, low and tremulous. Sometimes it seems to be farther off, then nearer. This depends on whether it comes from this or that side of the wooded crest of the hill.

The old Solitary follows, by ear, the line the hound is hunting. It seems to him that his enemy is on the scent he left overnight. Prudence would dictate that he should rise and fly; but he drank much and ate heavily last night; his lair is damp and cool; and by now the sun had scattered the morning mists; and must have warmed the hill-crests on which it shines.

The big boar turns round, grunting; what does it matter if they come to him. He is very well where he is. He is massive, vigorous and strong; his tusks are long, and sharpened like dagger-blades. With one blow of his muzzle he will send any hound, bold enough to attack him, rolling, disembowelled and bathed in gore.

But now other sonorous notes have joined those of the first hound; others are on his scent. They now resound almost continuously; and come nearer.

Perhaps it would be wise to decline battle, and to fly.

Regretfully, the Solitary rises from his wallow, and listens once more to his approaching enemies. All his coarse bristles are on end. Then he lowers his ears; and goes off in a dignified manner, wagging his head as he does so.

He mounts the hill at a trot, grunting and blowing, stopping at intervals to listen to the music of the pack, which is now at the bottom of the combe: it is always louder, always more hurried.

All at once the notes cease. The forest appears to have returned to its silence and immobility. From its very suddenness the stillness seems the greater.

The Solitary's crest bristles. He turns his muzzle towards the valley and pricks his ears. What is about to happen?

A few more silent seconds elapse; and then suddenly the music of the pack recommences, sonorous, joyous, and maddening now, every hound scoring to cry.

They had reached the wallow he had so lately quitted: they had taken up the fresh scent; the hunt is up! The whole valley echoes and resounds.

The note of the old tufter, low and sonorous, rules the chorus, which from time to time the higher voices of the bitches drown.

The great old boar bounds forward; and with a crash of broken branches, drives through the covert, crushing down bay and juniper, beech and thorn, brambles and hazels alike.

On his scent the pack, at top-speed, scoring to cry, tears along, climbs, descends, breaks through, bounds.

From rocks to coverts, from clearings to low-cut, from the woods to the plain, through cool and shady valleys, across the bare and sun-heated crests, goes the Solitary at his best pace.

He grunts, blows, and sobs, throws himself into the most impenetrable jungles, returns on his old line, crosses his own scent, traverses streams and ponds; but, nevertheless, the pack is always on his line.

Occasionally, the cry of the hounds ceases; but soon the deep note of the tufter resounds once more and all the rest break out again, chorusing the loud and joyous music of hounds in full cry.

The old Solitary grows weary. His feast of the past night, and the copious draughts of water which

he drank when he re-entered the forest, make him heavy.

Moreover, he feels no further desire to flee from the enemies who are howling on his track.

He plunges into a combe where he knows he will find the trunk of an old and dead oak-tree, in the middle of a narrow and unencumbered clearing.

He reaches the stump. Though dried-up it is as firm as a rock. He whets his tusks on the rough bark; and waits, his bristles on end, and his eye bloodshot.

From time immemorial, his forebears, well-armed as himself, brave and hardy fighters, great old boars, with savage and morose dispositions, have fought in this manner, their backs to an oak, facing the howling pack.

In our mountains, in our forests frequented by great solitaries, the Hunts of Volscians, Romans, Ligurians, Moors, and Franks have sounded joyous horn-notes; and from all ages hounds, with the same courage and tenacity have bayed savage boars.

At the roots of this old oak, so well adapted for defence, how many great old boars, sounders and young boars, sows and solitaries must have turned to bay and to fight courageously, fangs against tusks, numbers against brute force, the weights differing

greatly, the weapons also, but the courage equal on both sides, until a spear or a knife, wielded by a man, ends the terrible battle; or till the boar with a tremendous blow of his muzzle, and a splendid charge, throwing aside the hounds, which cling to his ears, and covered with blood from their wounds and his own, dashes to the ground the brave and rash huntsman.

But here is the pack, breaking covert, and about to dash upon him as the tradition of its sires has taught it. He stiffens himself ready to meet the shock of the baying pack, he gets ready to strike the charging enemies with his muzzle, for that is his method of fighting; and he, the old boar, has not degenerated from the courage of his forebears. The fight, on the same lines as in past centuries, develops with the old violence and dash.

The hounds emerging from the low-cut, spring upon him in a general rush. A jaw opens and closes with a clash, seizing his right ear; but with a blow of his muzzle he has disembowelled and hurled two yards away another hound which attempted to do the same with the left one. The great wire-haired hound now lies, his stomach torn open; and his limbs, pointed upwards, move feebly and spasmodically.

For a moment the pack pauses; once more their music rises in long-drawn-out bayings, sounding defiance, battle, and death, the noble music of the fight.

Valleys, hills, rocks, and mountains echo the war-cry they know so well; and which has aroused them at intervals during so many long years.

The mountain and the oaks seem to have grown a score of centuries younger, for the battle-music of the pack is as unchangeable as the ardour and courage of its enemies. It is the same baying as the trees and rocks heard when Volscian warriors or Roman legionaries hunted enormous solitaries with the spear alone.

Again the pack dashes on the wild beast. He deals blows with his muzzle amongst the growling and howling mass surrounding him.

He fights terrifically, but in silence, his eye glittering under the coarse hair which covers it.

A fragment of entrails hangs from one tusk. A rough, black, white and tan hound howls, with his shoulder torn out. Another one, silently but savagely, licks the blood which is pouring from his chest. A bitch, her flank perforated as with a dagger, groans.

Round the grunting Solitary the ring of hounds grows larger.

But now the man appears.

Oaks and beeches shiver, for they have seen ancient warriors dash, weapon in hand, on the Solitary at bay. They know the bold and final act of the drama.

The old boar knows, too, what he has to do. The man overtops him, but he has no fear; and stiffens himself, ready to strike this new enemy as he did the others.

A report rings out.

The old boar, astonished, feels a blow in his breast. Blood pours out; he suffocates; he kneels; killing a dog as he does so, whilst the pack hurls itself upon him. He falls, conquered; and his little fiery eyes, now growing dim, contemplate this new man, who strikes, from a distance, with rage, astonishment and contempt.

# CHAPTER XI

## A LOSS

ONE fine February morning I took my gun and the dogs, and walked down to the seashore. At this point there is a ruinous chalet—why ruinous I do not know, as the situation is delightful. On each side of it extends a strip of fir plantation nearly a mile long. I bent my footsteps towards the one to the south, and almost directly the hounds found a fox. He took a turn in a covert, and then headed due south, and, though I hastened to cut him off, I found hounds gone away.

In the afternoon I returned to where I had last heard them, and on the following day I took a big round in the high *maquis* beyond, but in vain.

It was not till six days later that, going down to Vadina, I learnt that they had been heard hunting daily in that neighbourhood, but a day's quest proved in vain, though I too heard them in the distance.

On the evening of the seventh day, one of the

engineers of the Casabianda estate came in and said that he had seen two dogs (or the same one twice?) on the main road five miles south. My wife drove out at once and recovered "Dido"—terribly emaciated and miserable looking—and no wonder after seven and a half days in the wilds. The next day and the next we spent in fruitless searches for "Druid."

I fear the exertions and privations to which he had been exposed—and be it remembered with one useless leg—had been too much for that gallant little spirit.

After this it was with but little zest that I attended the meets of the "Casabianda Hunt." Another wandering gunner, the Vicomte de C., had turned up at the hotel, and on his only attempt he had the good luck to kill two boars in one beat.

A week later, the Master of the Hunt posted me at the identical spot where I had missed a fortnight before. "You can have your *revanche*," he said.

I did. I believe it was the same boar who broke at the same point.

My boyhood's friend "The Old Shekarry" used to write of administering to big game "a pill from the hands of the Bishop of Bond Street."

The Bishop is long since gathered to his fathers;

and Bond Street knows the firm of Westley Richards no more, but Mr Leslie Taylor is a worthy successor to the former; and the "L.T." bullet efficiently replaces the old-fashioned spherical ball. At all events, one of them put "paid" to the account of the finest boar I had yet seen in the island, on this occasion. Unfortunately he had the mark of an old wound on his jaw, one tusk being gone, and this rather spoilt my trophy.

In the same beat the Mayor of Aléria also killed a nice four-year-old; and later on another gun had a third pig. Hounds were still running when the gathering dusk obliged us to discontinue our sport, satisfied that we had kept up the average. In 1920 the "Hunt" accounted for over one hundred boars —a total it would probably be difficult to equal in Europe to-day, now that Imperial and Royal preserves are a thing of the past.

All this was very well; but it brought me no nearer my stag—and indeed no information was forthcoming as to these.

I spent a long day on the Vadina forest, alone, but failed even to find so much as a fresh "slot." Still it was pleasant to ramble through the bush, now all a mass of flowers, notably the Mediterranean heath and the wild lavender. The cistus, too, was

beginning to give out its characteristic scent, though it was still too early for its blossoms. In the meadows, through which I passed on my way to the forest, masses of narcissi were everywhere in flower.

Casabianda must be, as indeed I am told it is, a perfect paradise in spring; and it is said to be perfectly free from fever till May.[1]

The next thing I shot was a snipe. I mention so trivial a matter because with two successive shots I thus killed the largest and the smallest of Corsican game, proving the wisdom of my choice of a "Fauneta" gun for such countries. Indeed, for boar-shooting alone I prefer the weapon to a rifle. My last position during the previous shoot had been in a ride or path through high covert, and certainly not five feet wide. There are many men who could hit running game with a bullet under such circumstances, but I am not one of them; and unblushingly substituted buck-shot cartridges for ball, which the "Fauneta" enabled me to do. I did not get a shot, however, on this occasion.

My last day with the "Hunt" was fine, but the wind was bitterly cold. For the first beat I had to don waders and cross the stream which drains the south of Casabianda into the big lagoon. After

[1] But see Chapter XIV.

this I shivered in the wind till noon, but the beat was blank—a very unusual thing here.

After lunch I was placed on the old spot, having before me the *maquis*, and the sea, with the island of Monte Cristo in the background. I certainly did not expect to see anything on this occasion, but in sport it is generally the unexpected that happens.

A long, cold beat followed, but to my surprise, as it drew to its close, another boar came my way, and I dropped him within ten yards of where the one of the week before had fallen. He was, however, a much smaller animal.

We had one more beat, but nobody else got a shot on this occasion.

This brought February to an end. We had promised to go back to Pietrapola, and with some regrets we tore ourselves away from beautiful Casabianda. The chief regret, of course, was for poor "Druid," so sadly left behind. Whyte Melville, in that charming book "The Interpreter," ends the description of his dog's death at the Redan, with the words: "I was very, very sorry for poor 'Bold.'" Like him, I was very, very sorry for poor "Druid."

# CHAPTER XII

## MOUFFLON

To describe the humours of a small, inland watering place is a task held to have been unsuccessfully attempted by Sir Walter Scott in "St Ronan's Well." Here one would rather require the pen of Lever, for our society at Pietrapola reminded me more of the odd folk to whom this writer introduces us in some of his boarding-house scenes. In any case, to describe their peculiarities, flirtations, quarrels and complaints is equally beyond my powers, and outside the scope of this book.

Suffice it to say that we had representatives of most nations, and of all professions and trades, for nothing is more democratic than a Corsican *table d'hôte*. We even had an election—if only a Senatorial one—which brought motor-cars buzzing about. Corsicans take elections seriously; indeed, most of them look to them for a livelihood in the future. As for the wider issues involved, all candi-

dates are liberal with promises, and few, if any, deputies or senators achieve anything for the country.

However, as Daudet has already described a Corsican election, I shall certainly not enter into competition with his racy account.

From my point of view Pietrapola was a blank, and moreover a blank filled with a great deal of bad weather.

I had failed with the stags; the next thing to try for was the moufflon. Hearing there were a fair number in the district I made my way by motor-bus to Ste. Lucie de Porto Vecchio. The drive, in pouring rain, was not interesting, and when I got there the weather was hopeless. The hills, beyond which I was to look for moufflon, were white with freshly fallen snow; and my first night was one tremendous and prolonged thunderstorm.

Ste. Lucie is the winter village of the Zonza folk, and here I found the Mayor and many other people with whom I had had an acquaintance during the previous summer.

The weather, if it delayed my shooting prospects, gave me a chance, during fine intervals, of motoring to Porto Vecchio; and of visiting that rather interesting old town. The drive down to the harbour, and

the gulf itself are beautiful, and I was glad to have had the chance of seeing the quaint old Genoese city. Owing to its situation, and also to its unhealthiness in summer, Porto Vecchio has declined to something very little more than an important village to-day, but it has a certain export trade, especially in cork. Our whole drive, indeed, was through cork-woods.

On my return I found the *garde* of the forests I was to shoot awaiting me. Of course he pooh-poohed the idea of stalking, or rather, said, with a good deal of reason, that my time up there would be too short. To this argument I had to yield; though I am generally pretty stiff-necked in my opposition to local prejudice.

Accordingly, on the following day—the weather still improving—I walked up four miles to the village of Conca, the commune in which the forests in question lie.

Conca is an exceptional village in that it has no dirty central street (?) with the houses huddled round it, like most places in Corsica. Every house here lies in its own well-watered gardens and orchards, and probably a hundred yards away from the nearest neighbours. The effect is very pleasant; but like so many places hereabouts it is

situate in a cup of the hills, and must be very hot in summer.

I found the *garde* awaiting me, and he took me to the Mayor, a more intelligent one than one sometimes finds in these places. He was quite in sympathy with my quest, but dubious about the weather. Could I not put the matter off till the following week? On the upshot we settled that I would do so, starting off on the Monday morning early. Meanwhile the Mayor would try to arrange a boar-shoot for the Saturday to fill up the time.

Things being thus arranged I walked off back to my luncheon. Ste. Lucie is one of those places for whose existence there seems to be no justification whatever. Although it lies on the alluvium formed by the stream that comes down from Paliri, it seems to have a very small quantity of agricultural land; and I imagine what work is done by its inhabitants is mostly on the cork trees, here very abundant. It is notably unhealthy, and has no drinkable water. Being, technically, a hamlet of Zonza parish, many miles away, it has no church. Certainly there is a chapel and a cemetery at its port of Pinarello, three miles away, but there is no priest.

Pinarello is even more dead than Ste. Lucie. Any cork intended for shipment goes by road to

Porto Vecchio; and though the sea here abounds in fish, there are no fishermen and no boats. Even the little river, which has plenty of trout, is neglected by the local sportsmen, who seem to loaf about the roads with their guns at all seasons.

A poorer place to be weatherbound in it would be hard to find, but unfortunately on the third day of my stay it rained harder than ever, and it was impossible to get out.

A week's wet weather is rare in Corsica in winter, so it was doubly hard that I should have it in spring; but my first week at Ste. Lucie was rainy on every day but one. The Sunday found matters still very much in doubt; and although I had been twice to Conca, I finally got no message, and had again to postpone my start. Of course, the day I had fixed proved fine.

On the Tuesday I got away by motor at a quarter past six, and soon reached San Martino, where there are some woodmen's huts. To my disgust I found the Conca men had not turned up. I felt I could not turn back, so I arranged with two woodcutters to act as stalkers. Mounting one of the mules that were awaiting me I sent the other off to the woodcutter's hut at Aregale with my baggage.

I rode for about three-quarters of an hour to the

end of the practicable mule track, and we then started on to face the mountain. The plan we adopted is what used to be called in Austria, *riegeln*, in other words, the attempt to move the game by one or two men towards the rifle in a limited area. Unfortunately it is more often the beaters who see the game under these circumstances. Before luncheon they saw four, but I only one—a small one. After our frugal meal Grimaldi pointed up to the Pointe de Bonifacio, one of the granite aiguilles common in this district, and asked if I could walk up there. It looked a tall order for sixty odd, especially as I had not had a climb since the Anti-Lebanon, but I said I would try. "Then," said he, "we go down the other side to the hut." So we started.

I had not realised that I was to shoot in a burnt forest, but so it proved. All that day and the next I walked through charred pines and *maquis*, and from the farthest point I reached I saw it extending down the right bank of the Solenzara. That part of it I had seen before from the Alza.

On my left, as we climbed, was a line of weird aiguilles, having one almost the size and shape of Westminster Cathedral tower. This I had often seen with the glass from Casabianda. These crown

a spur running out from the Queredetella, on the other side of which we had watched a forest fire in the previous year.

Presently we came on two moufflon. They were small, too, and we let them go without a shot. Perhaps I had my reward, for not long afterwards I got my first moufflon, but it was far from being the record ram that every stalker hopes for. I sent it round to the hut, but the bearer was also to try and move the game as he went. Soon after, three more small beasts were sighted; and what was more strange at this elevation, we came on fresh traces of wild boar. Up and up we went, the going being practically one mass of loose stones with a little slab-rock. It was very trying.

At last Grimaldi pointed to a single pine tree to the left of the Pointe.

"If you will make that tree," he said, "you will find a saddle behind it. Take up a position at the back of it, and I will go up this way and try to move them towards you."

I may add that he got into a place where he could not progress, with bare feet, and had to go back.

I soon found my task was no easy one, and the last hundred yards was bare and wet rock. There was not much snow, only lingering patches. At last

CORSICAN GAME COUNTRY.

I reached the single tree, and my appointed place. The Pointe de Bonifacio is over 4,150 feet, so that I climbed quite 4,000 that day, having left sea level, or thereabouts, at daybreak. The wind blew fairly steadily through the gap, and curled round to my right. If Grimaldi was successful, I might get a chance, especially as I heard the other man shouting far below. It was cold enough waiting, especially as nothing happened, till I saw Grimaldi carrying his boots and climbing down the peak in front. He came up to me and whispered that he had seen a fine ram to my right rear, but the beast obviously would not face the gap. So he proposed to go round bare-foot, and try and move him up. I told him it was useless, as the ram must have had my wind, but he went off, unsuccessfully, of course. This ram was within range of me as far as distance goes, but hidden by about the only green pines I came across here.

Now came the descent. It was abominable. We had to go down a steep moraine, and there is nothing more trying to weary legs. At last Grimaldi said:

"Now, we'll cross the stream. It will be better there."

"Better," however, meant burnt *maquis*, which is also abominable. It is burnt enough to blacken

you; but the *bruyère* is still tough enough to push you back.

Then it began to rain.

"Of course," said my companion, "of course it rains when we have to go through the *maquis*."

This was an unburnt patch; but luckily the rain soon stopped and we got through dry. By shouting we got in touch with the other man, whose name I never learnt; and Grimaldi took a hand with the moufflon. Before we went on we looked back at the rocks we had come down from.

"There's an animal," said my sharp-eyed Corsicans.

My glass soon showed it to be a wild goat. It was standing on the very top of the rock-ledge, but could hardly have seen us at the distance—a thousand yards perhaps.

Grimaldi said there are always a few of these wild goats (feral, of course) in these cliffs, and that, after a couple of years' liberty, they become wilder than the moufflon.

Just before dark we got to the wood-cutters' hut, and it was not very long before we had moufflon-liver sizzling in the frying-pan. Very good it was, too.

It was, within a month, twenty-one years since I

had last had fried fresh moufflon-liver for my dinner, and that, too, was in a mountain hut—in Cyprus to wit. (I need hardly say that the Cypriote wild sheep is not a true moufflon, though generally so called.)

The hut at Aregale was inhabited, from Monday mornings till Saturday afternoons, by a dozen Corsican wood-cutters—and an inordinate number of fleas. However, at this season, there was nothing worse. It was furnished simply with two rows of guard-beds, on one of which my camp-cot was put up, and with a large fire in the middle of the earthen floor, the smoke of which escaped, more or less, by the roof. However, I was too tired to be critical, and slept soundly.

We were all up early, and I left, after coffee, to climb a fairly good track to the plateau of Paliri. We had also recruited some more beaters. My first position was at the base of another of the granite aiguilles common in the district. In front of me was the perforated peak of Taliri, the hole in which surveyed our proceedings like a gigantic eye. Unfortunately the beat was blank, as was the following one, during which I had before me the valley of the Solenzara, in fact much of the country I had seen eight months before. Only one moufflon was

moved, a good ram; but he elected to depart in a direction opposite to mine.

About two o'clock hail and rain came on, and I walked back to Aregale. After a meal my kit was put together, and I remounted my mule to ride down to St. Martino. The pass by which the river Ste. Lucie runs through two sheer walls of rock was very fine, but the rain was heavy, and I was glad to reach the motor-car; and to return to Ste. Lucie.

The results of my trip were meagre, but it is always something to have seen a fresh wild animal in its native surroundings. To get a good result here is difficult, and in any case more time than I had to spare is necessary.

However, I had proved that the moufflon of Corsica, in spite of many persecutors, still exists. The laws are ample to give it the necessary protection, but unfortunately nobody pays them—or any others—the least attention in Corsica. Where a man's life is so cheap nobody is likely to pay much attention to the death of a wild sheep.

From Ste. Lucie I made my way back to Pietrapola; and after a further sojourn there of something under a fortnight, during which time it rained almost incessantly, I then left "Wild Corsica" for com-

parative civilisation. At least I experienced the novel sensations of being in a railway carriage—it was some years since I had entered one—of a Grand Hotel, and of other things very far removed from the life I had been leading.

# CHAPTER XIII

## THE CORSICANS

During my stay at Ste. Lucie, I had met at lunch a young Italian, over here to wind up the affairs of his late brother, shot at Solenzara during the previous year. The assassin had been sentenced to the usual five years' imprisonment, but if he does them, it will be for want of political backing.

Corsicans are always clamouring for the introduction of foreign capital as necessary to the development of their country, as it undoubtedly is. It so happened that during my wanderings I came across a number of enterprises in the hands of capitalists of other nations, Swiss, Italian, British, Spanish and so forth. *They were all for sale;* and yet fundamentally they were good, sound concerns. Let me not be misunderstood to mean that fears of personal violence were the cause of this, but rather the general disregard of law. For instance, an Italian capitalist bought some square mile and a half of forest, with the intention of "lumbering" as it

would be called in Canada. Having bought it he instructed his manager to prohibit shooting and grazing on his property, which was done. It was then found that no Corsican labour was to be had for the estate; and he was obliged to throw it open to goats and gunners. Shortly afterwards the forest was burnt, possibly accidentally; but the coincidence was curious. After all, he had only claimed his legal rights within the French law.

I have referred once or twice to Communal lands in Corsica. These are, in some cases, of enormous extent. The Commune of St. Pietro di Tenda, in the north, owns some ten square miles of land.[1] But, as a rule, these estates are of no profit to their owners. Certainly they are grazed by the flocks and herds of the commoners, but also by those of all others, and without payment.

These lands are practically inalienable. It is true the Communal Council can sell, with the consent of the Prefect. But, as I have said before, whether legally or not, every commoner expects to be asked for his consent, which it is an impossibility to get, for many of them are abroad. A purchaser who failed to get it, however, would be likely to find him-

[1] The Agriates. See Chapter XIV.

self confronted, sooner or later, with the Corsican Court of Appeal—the gun. So in actual fact these great unwieldy estates remain, although some of them—I may quote that of Ghisonnaccia—could profitably be put under the plough to-morrow. A proposal has been made, before the Geographical Society of Paris, that these communal lands should be divided up. This, I think, would be impossible; but their sale, in cases where a fair offer was forthcoming, should certainly be encouraged. But who is likely to buy unless the French Government is prepared to guarantee him the free enjoyment of *all* his owner's rights, to say nothing of his own personal safety when enforcing them? I am brought back again to my original argument. To make Corsica prosperous France must first enforce the law there. It will not be easy, and lives will be lost. But what Italy has done in Calabria and Sicily should be possible for the Republic.

I may be told that these are serious subjects, beyond the scope of a book of sport and country life. I can assure the reader, nevertheless, that they are questions which, to some extent, must affect all visitors to Corsica. Not, indeed, that they will be in any danger to their lives or property; but it is impossible for any intelligent person to make a

prolonged stay in the island without becoming aware of the wretched conditions under which the people live; and which I unhesitatingly attribute to the disregard of all law.

For instance, just before my second visit to Pietrapola there was an outbreak of rabies in the place. This is the sort of thing which must affect any visitor, and no doubt law, if enforced, would have made it safer for him. As it was I found that one or two dogs, actually suffering from the disease, had been shot, but there was no apparent diminution in the number of useless curs about the village. What the practice of French law under such circumstances may be I do not know, but I do know that nominally there is a licence required to keep a dog in Corsica. Who pays it? I never heard of a case.

I cannot close this record without saying something of the Corsican.

The inhabitants of the island are of all races. The Man of Science is writing a notable book to prove that the country was peopled by the Ligurians. Since those days many races have lived in the island. Greeks, Romans, Saracens, Spaniards, Italians, Englishmen, and finally Frenchmen have held Corsica, in whole or part. Even Germans have

been here, for the Genoese Republic employed mercenary troops of that nation, thousands of whom left their bones here, and were duly paid for by the Signoria.

I am afraid the Corsican has assimilated the faults of all his rulers, and few of their virtues. With few exceptions they are idle and untruthful, but they are honest and courageous. No race makes better soldiers. That they lack manners is a matter of education, but they are essentially polite.

In many ways they resemble the Arabs, and like them, they are *un peuple criard*. They claim to have the Bedouin's virtue of hospitality, but I never experienced this.

Corsicans, and especially the Corsican Press, frequently boast of their "traditional hospitality." If they do so with justice I must have been singularly unfortunate, as, during an experience of the island extending to nearly three years, I can only recall one instance—afternoon tea at the house of some delightful ladies at Ghisoni—of its being exercised on our behalf.

On the other hand I have various and lively memories of kindnesses of French and Italian residents in the island, in some cases married to Corsicans. The inference I draw from these

circumstances is that the tradition does not find its origin in fact; or, if it does, that it is only a tradition, and not a present-day truth.

I might go further and say that in Corsica the very hotel-keepers are lacking in hospitality. Not that they are not glad to see you, or any new faces; but it is very largely because they *are* new. After a few weeks your wants are languidly attended to, and the charms of some other resort are freely pressed upon you. We were especially amused by our landlady at Ghisoni, who, by the way, had previously played us the very common Corsican trick of agreeing to certain terms long before our visit, and saying at the end of a week or two that she " really couldn't do it."

When we had been there a month or so she hardly let a day pass without some such remark as: " Vezzani is very pleasant," " You'd find the hotel at Ghisonnaccia most comfortable," " You'd find it much nicer to be on the railway," or, " I'm sure the baths of Pietrapola would do you a lot of good." And if she desisted at last it was because she realised that we were on the look-out for any statement of this nature, and received it with shouts of laughter.

The country is, beyond all description, filthy, both as regards the exterior and interior of the

houses, and, indeed, this remark applies to the towns also.

Unfortunately one cannot turn to the rising generation for any hope of improvement. Not long ago I remarked to a village schoolmaster that he ought to instil some principles of ordinary sanitation and cleanliness into his charges.

"How can I?" he replied. "I should get no encouragement from the authorities. All the parents ask is that they should learn to read and write."

Many do not even achieve this. A day or two ago I asked a boy why he was not at school.

"*Perché non voglio*," was his reply. (Because I do not wish it.)

Education is compulsory, and attendance at school obligatory. Thus early does the Corsican disregard of the law commence. I may here remark that the children and lads have since the war, at any rate, lost the politeness of their elders. They pass you with a sullen stare.

Nor can I omit a reference to the women of Corsica; and unfortunately I have few favourable recollections of them. For the fact that not one in a hundred has any pretensions to comeliness they are not to blame, but they need not always have a

malevolent scowl for the stranger, as they do. I admit they have the hardest of lives. Practically all the work devolves upon them. Almost invariably they have enormous families; and their lives are one unceasing grind from marriage to the grave. No wonder they are envious of those whom they see live under happier conditions.

Family affection is extraordinarily strong amongst the Corsicans, not only as between parents and children, but even collateral relations are very closely united. In fact, family affairs, together with their ridiculous politics (?) make up the sum total of the life of many a Corsican.

If, at any time, I were asked the question: "What is the greatest vice of the Corsican?" I should have no hesitation in replying: "Evil-speaking, lying, and slandering." It is really extraordinary what a hold this beastly—there is no other word—fault has got on the people of the island—a people whose traditions are so strangely opposed to anything of the sort. I attribute it largely—I may be wrong, of course—to their incurable laziness. When you spend half, or indeed the whole, day lounging on the wall in front of the post-office, or sitting on the stone-bench outside the cobbler's (who, being industrious and a worker from dawn to dark, and

probably an Italian to boot, no doubt wishes you all at the devil, but is much too discreet to say so) you must talk about *something*.

What so convenient, as a subject of conversation, as the affairs of your neighbours, *their* neighbours, the stranger within your gates, people you have never seen and probably never will see, at the other end of the island, but whom you unhesitatingly sum up as no better than they ought to be. For this is the extraordinary thing about the Corsican *mauvaise langue*, that it occupies itself just as actively with people who are entirely strange and alien to the speaker, and who, humanly speaking, are certain to remain so. The island is so small that good report and bad—but ten times as often the latter—travel almost with the speed of thought from one wine-shop to another, from one *commune* to another, from the seashore to the mountains, and *vice versâ*. "Do you know so and so, the carter of this and that?" "Well, I've never seen him, but my cousin has. (They are all cousins in Corsica, *cela va sans dire*.) He's a regular miser, dresses in rags." "That's the man; well, he has a daughter, Celeste, etc., etc., etc."

Yet neither of the parties to this conversation, nor any of their auditors—there always is an interested

group of the latter—have ever seen the carter in question or his daughter, whose character they proceed to blast, and the story about whom several of the listeners will carry home to their respective villages that evening.

It is on these occasions one regrets the *Vendetta*. Is it to be supposed when Corsican girls were so strictly guarded that it was death to touch their hands—unless indeed your suit was approved by their family—it would have been safer to repeat scandal about them behind their backs? I hardly think so; but they say that all Corsican girls were moral in those days, so there was doubtless not so much to talk about. Also, at that time, there was more work done, as the remnants of boundary walls, and the bracken-covered arable fields, in the hills, testify. You couldn't come down to the coast then to cultivate the plain without a strong chance of being killed, or carried off to help to work a Moorish galley. Still less could you import inferior flour from France. In that age I take it every Corsican had to live by the sweat of his brow. When the villagers gathered round the hearth in the evenings, or round the fountain on a feast day, they were in a healthier frame of body and mind; and if there was gossip it was not malicious.

Let me not be misunderstood to mean that the modern habit of scandalous gossip does not lead to homicide, because it does so; and that within my own knowledge. Thersites is a character to be found everywhere; and he tells A first what B said, or did not say, about him, just as his prototype talked to Achilles. What wonder if the thing rankles in A's mind, until, looking at things from the Corsican view-point, the desire to empty his gun into B's back becomes irresistible.

Certainly the desire to protect the honour of one's womenfolk by the *voie-de-fait* is rare now in Corsica. I have known cases in which I was inclined to regret it. Here is one.

A girl in the village of P—— was betrothed to a non-commissioned officer. It is, it seems, a custom in modern Corsica for a couple thus situated to go for a trial-trip, as it were. (I believe the custom is not unknown, too, in Wales.) So these people did so.

But when the wedding-day had come, and the guests had assembled, there was no bridegroom. In his stead came a note to the effect that his mother objected to the marriage.

"And," wound up the bride-that-should-have-been, to us, "in my family there wasn't

one who was man enough to shoot him, as he deserved."

It was true, for the father was a wretched sot living a low life in Bastia, and brothers she had none. So her fiancé returned unscathed to his regiment on the Continent.

In the village of G—— there was a married man, who abducted—the word is perhaps too strong, for neither of them left the village—a girl of decent family. The scandal was great, and the girl's mother was driven to drink by it.

Now the girl had a father who could shoot—it is true he was a very bad shot, but I think he could have put the Corsican regulation charge for these occasions, slugs with a ball on top, into a man at short range. Also she had a brother—young, certainly, but capable of knocking over a wild boar (for I have known him to do it).

But there was no shooting; and the last time I saw them, the man, the young woman, and their two bastards were staying with her family.

Explanation: the man was well-to-do. Corsicans are desperate worshippers of the Golden Calf.

Merriman wrote of Corsica as *The Isle of Unrest.* I have not found the description pertinent. As a rule it is restful enough—sleepy in fact—I

would prefer to describe it as the island where there is no law, or rather, where the laws are excellent, and no man regardeth them.

Well, now I come to the further question—I have seen it trembling on your lips for some time; and it is one that cannot be evaded in a book of this sort: "Do you like the Corsicans?"

I must answer it bluntly and truly; and the answer can only be, "I do not."

I have good friends amongst them; and they—if they ever read these lines, which, by the way, they won't, for none of them knows English—must forgive me for saying what I have. The Corsicans have good qualities. They are brave, honest, not discourteous, and, above all, excellent parents, and devoted children. But there is something about them which prevents their being *sympathique* to other races.

Lest it be supposed that this feeling is personal to myself I may say I have put this question to every "Continental" I have met in the island, English, French and Italian—that is to say to everyone with whom I became even in a limited degree intimate. I must except one only, to whom, as he had a Corsican wife, I did not think I could fairly put the query. Amongst the men I asked were

those of every class, scientists who had worked for years in Corsica, sportsmen who had shot in the islands for many winters, men of business who had long owned or managed properties there, even Sardinian workmen. From one and all came the same answer, " No, I do not like them."

The French—although the greatest Frenchman of all times was a Corsican—frankly detest them, but perhaps there are reasons for this. To begin with few Frenchmen escape being under Corsican non-commissioned officers during their military service, and I can believe that experience is not pleasant. Again, the Corsican connotes in the French mind the police—the *mouchard*, and the prison-warder—two classes very unpopular in France.

Again it is difficult to like people who don't like you. The Corsican does not conceal his dislike of all " Continentals," in which designation the English are, somewhat incongruously, included.

" What is he doing *here?* What does he want *here?* Hasn't he got a house of his own? " This is literally what Corsicans think, and say, about strangers. Their *money* is all right; they want that, but otherwise they would rather see their backs.

The Corsican's greatest asset is the natural beauty of his island, "The most beautiful island in the world," one poster I saw in France modestly called it, as I have said before. Their local press continually contains articles urging them to attract visitors. It was rather laughable to read the advice therein given to innkeepers before the motor-races of 1921, such as that they should polish their floors (which are never even washed); and then to go round and see that no Corsican hotel-keeper had profited in any degree by all this good advice. "Here is the hotel," they say. "If the guest doesn't like it, the door is open."

This is a detestable attitude on the part of these people. There is no desire to meet the stranger half-way. If the hotel doesn't suit you go elsewhere. If the demand for mule-hire is excessive (as it always is to the foreigner) do without the beast. Yet they pretend to want tourists—nay more, they *do* want them.

Not long ago I read a pleasant little book on Corsica by two ladies, who concluded it by saying (I quote from memory) "If this book deters one proposed visitor to Corsica from going there it will not have been written in vain." These words come from the heart; and they are calculated to do more

harm to Corsican tourist traffic than any amount of posters can neutralise; and they really mean that the authors felt themselves among a people who were not sympathetic to them, and did not even try to appear so.

At one time Corsica had one great attraction for Englishmen of a certain class—it was absurdly cheap. Last year when the French franc was a little over fifty to the pound sterling country inns in Corsica were asking twenty-five francs a day for full board—full board according to their ideas generally meaning black coffee and dry bread for breakfast, to quote one item only. Now for that sum, indeed for a good deal less, very fairly comfortable hotels in Nice were glad to take visitors, at that time. The Corsican inn on the other hand contains a few bedrooms, one dining-room, and no indoor sanitation. That, at least, is the usual arrangement.

Sometimes, indeed, it is worse.

We once spent a night at Francardo. We dined there, slept there, and had coffee, and also *déjeuner*. Then came the time for our train; but no bill. I demanded it.

"Oh! You won't want a bill," replied the landlady. "It's sixty francs."

"*Madame*," I answered, "*c'est un vol.*"

She pocketed that—the deadliest insult a Corsican can receive—and my money.

Now I had made no bargain beforehand, as I was only staying a day; and as our rooms had been ordered by a friend, who, having business in the neighbourhood, frequently stayed there. I met him shortly afterwards.

"By the way," I asked him, "what do you pay a day at that Francardo inn?"

"Eighteen francs," he replied.

Yet Corsicans wonder the tourist traffic does not increase.

But I have got a long way from the question you asked me, though really all this has a certain bearing on my answer.

NOTE.—It is perhaps only fair to the innkeepers to say that in fixing their charges they are a good deal influenced by the local scales of wages and rents. During the War these naturally went up—but since the War—for no reason that I can conceive—they have gone up still more.

In 1922, the scale of wages paid to *Vendangeurs* in continental France, according to the *Morning Post*, was as follows;

In Guienne (Claret districts), "four francs and sometimes a bottle of wine."

In Burgundy, "five francs and a bottle of wine."

In the same year Corsican labourers were demanding, and receiving, fifteen francs and a bottle of wine.

Similarly the rents for sheep-grazing in Corsica were enormously in excess of those paid on the Continent. These sheep are kept purely for milking purposes, the milk being made into cheese, which is all exported, and becomes the "Roquefort cheese" of commerce. The Corsicans have to content themselves with cheese imported from Sardinia, which is horrible stuff, but nevertheless sells at five and six francs a pound (exchange a little over fifty francs to the £1 sterling).

A certain amount of very fair Corsican cheese, mostly from the Venaco district, does, however, come into the local market.

# CHAPTER XIV

## CORSICA ONCE TOO OFTEN

During all our wanderings, generally speaking in little-known parts of the world, we have made it a hard and fast rule *never to go back*. So much is this the case that I can only recall one breach of that rule, and that was when I returned to Antimilo (as related in "The Image of War"). Moreover life is too short to allow of going back on one's tracks.

How was it, then, that after a summer spent in the Alps, we retraced our footsteps to Corsica? Well, firstly, I think because my wife—and indeed myself also—hoped against hope that we might yet get some news of poor "Druid." In this hope, I may say here, we were totally disappointed. Secondly, I felt that I still owed myself a Corsican stag, and perhaps also a better moufflon than my first.

As I was now uncommonly fit and well, and moreover acquainted with the ground frequented by both

species I had every reason to anticipate satisfactory results.

So after a week spent in Nice—by no means unpleasantly, although the season had not commenced, we sailed thence to Bastia on the last day of October.

This town, the military headquarters and commercial centre of Corsica, contrasts favourably with Ajaccio. It has a theatre, visited by travelling companies, a good hotel—some say two—lighted streets, fair water, and a moderate degree of cleanliness. A military band enlivens the town on one or two days a week. Unfortunately it is cursed with a windy climate, as are many places in the island, and its natural surroundings have no great beauty.

I was not destined to see much of it on this occasion, for, in less than two hours of our landing, the morning train carried us off to Aléria, the old fortalice which we reached in time for *déjeuner*.

The whole country we traversed was dried up and deep in dust, for there had been no rain for months.

On our arrival we found that the hotel itself was not equal to our requirements—another man was joining me from England—and so took up our quarters in a flat belonging to our innkeeper at the other end of the tiny village. Of course we had to

come across to our meals, and the inconvenience of this was one of the causes that led to a short stay.

On the day after our arrival the wind rose and the clouds gathered. Such a tornado as this one rarely accompanies heavy rain. But the wet drove in through the tiles of the low-pitched roof, and the whole flat was inundated. During a slight lull we got across the flooded street to the inn for dinner; and were sitting rather disconsolately over our coffee when in walked E——, just out from England. We knew, of course, that he was due to arrive at Bastia from Marseilles that morning, but we also knew that the flooded river Tagnone had cut us off from the railway. How ever had he got here? It appeared that he had descended the left bank of the main river, the Tavignano (their confluence is just below the Fort d'Aléria), with the help of a native guide, and carrying his own gun-case and kit-bag. His guide had turned him loose on his reaching the main (Bastia-Bonifacio) road, which proved to be also flooded to the depth of some feet. More by luck than judgment he had got across the valley—for the road is embanked most of the way, and to blunder off it would have meant falling into deep water—and finally got up to us, wet through of course, but cheery. It did not take

RED DEER CHANGING GROUND.

me long to provide him with both dry clothes and food.

The result of the damp—I might really say the wet—of our flat, was to bring on a recrudescence of my Syrian complaint. But E—— went out indefatigably by himself, though only making very moderate bags. Aléria proved only so-so as a shooting centre. As soon as I felt better I joined him; and made quite a remarkable series of misses, right and left, at quail, woodcock, partridge and Norfolk plover respectively. It took me some time to realise that the French smokeless powder "M" will not bear keeping through the hot summers of the south. I had been using cartridges of the year before.

We had one or two days with the "Casabianda Hunt," which was conducted on the old cheery lines. But my individual luck was out. One boar I lost owing to the missfire of a (French) cartridge; on another day we were driven home during the very first beat by a tropical downpour. Finally, we made an elaborate *bundobust*, as they say in India, to try for a stag. No sooner were all the guns placed than the wind chopped right round, and of course we saw nothing, and heard nothing except hounds running in the wrong direction. Beaters saw, or claimed to

have seen, a single hind. Successive beats were also fruitless.

I had a day or two alone in the forest, but saw nothing better than the fresh tracks of a good stag. However, I had good hopes of success later, especially as I had succeeded in borrowing, from a French sportsman, a very fine *griffon* hound, which hunted well single-handed. Also we had moved to Casabianda, which is a handy place for the best deer-ground—bad as the hotel is.

Unfortunately, I went down on the 9th of December, with a sharp attack of malarial fever, which proves that Casabianda is unhealthy *all the year round*. About a fortnight saw me somewhat recovered, and on Christmas Day I went out after lunch with " Dido " and my gun.

About a hundred yards west of the Ghisonnaccia avenue of the place—I should rather say carriage-drive, for it has no trees, whilst the Bastia approach boasts a celebrated double row of planes—lies a small wood, which, because it included the old burying ground of the penal settlement, we called the Cemetery Wood. In a strip of hedgerow leading up to this " Dido " went off on a line, whilst I waited till a fox came back; and I shot it. The little hound hunted quite half an hour more in the wood; and

went away across the main road, proving that there had been a brace of foxes. The one I had killed turned out to be the vixen.

Little did I realise that this was to be the last shot I was to fire in Corsica; but so it was. The fever returned in a more virulent form; and in spite of a doctor's driving some score of miles to see me, I spent most of January and February in bed, which indeed I began to think I should only leave feet first. I dare not go to the hills; as a matter of fact we had snow and frost down to sea-level; and travel was impossible for me. At last a wandering sportsman suggested Travo as more comfortable and healthy. So I was bundled into a cabriolet, more intolerable, if possible, to a sick man than to a sound one, and driven along the plain to its southern extremity.

The hotel at Travo is almost the best on the east coast, and, being frequented largely by English fishermen, boasts conveniences quite unknown to most Corsican inns. The good people of the place shook their heads when they saw me, for they thought I had been brought there to die. As a matter of fact, in spite of more sharp attacks of fever, I improved in health there.

I have said that Travo is a fishing centre; and it

is also a good place for shooting. Unfortunately it is a bad place for wind. The river Travo holds sizable trout; but it is bad to fish, the banks being overgrown and often precipitous. The Solenzara, four miles to the southward, has many more trout, but they run small. A hundred and sixty have been basketed in a day by two Englishmen and a lady.

When April was getting on it was obviously time to leave the plain. As my wife was suffering from rheumatism we decided to drive to Pietrapola, so that she could take another course of its baths. The place did her good; but not myself, so we made a two days' journey thence to Ile Rousse, at the extreme north-west of the island. The sea-air helped me, but in June it began to grow hot, and the mosquitoes were a nuisance. The management of the hotel, too, was far inferior to that which it had been on our previous visit there.

Finally, we had the intolerable nuisance of the election, to which I referred in the early part of this book.

Ile Rousse is a pleasant little place, which was formerly very clean and well-kept, but has now deteriorated in this respect. Only, as an old fellow Sandhurst cadet, whom, oddly enough, I met here, remarked, "It is so infernally dull." Certainly

there is not much to do but to sit by the sea, once you have climbed to the light-house on the red rock which gives the place its name.

Unfortunately it suffers terribly from the wind. During our stay two party walls on the second floor of our hotel were blown right down, the *débris* falling through the ceiling of the second floor *salon*. At the same time a huge stone statue on a neighbouring villa was hurled so forcibly from its position that it cleared all the balconies of the building, and fell in the garden. This gale, however, was not confined to the north coast, for it did immense damage to Ajaccio harbour also.

Ile Rousse is quite a modern place, having been founded by Paoli. It therefore contrasts vividly with the old and picturesque town of Calvi, a little farther west. It is impossible to get to Calvi and back by train in the day, but it is only about fifteen miles to drive.

Many cities claimed to be the birthplace of Homer, who, modern authorities tell us, did *not* write the "Homeric poems." In the same way, Calvi is one of several places pretending to show us the birthplace of Columbus, who certainly did not discover America, which was known to our Norseman forebears long before his time—if not,

indeed, to the Pinzons, whose ships took him there. Calvi's other claim to notoriety is better founded; it was certainly there that Nelson lost his eye.

Not much farther to the eastward of Ile Rousse than Calvi is to the westward lies the old town of St. Florent. It can be reached either by steamer from Ile Rousse, or by motor from Bastia. Although it is unhealthy in summer it would make a pleasant winter resort as it is sheltered from the wind; but there is no decent hotel. The shooting and fishing are said to be good. St. Florent forms one joint of departure for the often described tour round Cap Corse. On the hills above it the famous Patrimonio wine is made.

Between St. Florent and Ile Rousse lies a curious district—the so-called desert of the Agriates. It consists of an enormous tract of scrubby *maquis*, mostly the property of one commune; and is said to contain more partridges than the entire remainder of the island. Be that as it may, the shooting is no doubt very good, for, as the district does not contain a single house the game has always had it to itself, with the exception of some wandering shepherds. Short of a camp it was not possible to work it, but, as there is a road along its northern border, motors

now facilitate its exploitation—partially, at any rate.

As we had decided that Ile Rousse was no longer tenable, the question was "where to go?" We were recommended to try the summer resort of Vivario—practically the centre of the island. We were the more willing to do this as we had a friend in the district in the shape of the only Englishman who has lived consecutively for some thirty years in the island; and who, during part of my stay, had been our most active and obliging Acting Consul. Furthermore he is the only Britisher of whom I have heard who has married a Corsican lady, although there are more cases of Corsicans marrying Englishwomen. His very charming wife is a great-niece of Napoleon's marshal, Arrighi de Casanova, subsequently the Duke of Padua, whose fine statue is one of the principal objects of interest in the town of Corté to-day.

So to Vivario we went. The latter part of the railway journey was new to us, and rather fine. We had a distant view of Corté—on the whole the best view for the stranger to take—and travelled *past* Vivario to take the great loop beyond and come back on a higher parallel line, to the station.

The Hôtel Marchesini proved distinctly above the

average of Corsican country inns; and though there was not much for an invalid to do there, besides sitting in the chestnut groves, Vivario might have been a pleasant enough sojourn if it had unfortunately not been about the noisiest village in Corsica. To the right of our hotel was a dancing-bar, whence a barrel organ droned every evening—and on a good many mornings too. Opposite us was another where they footed it to the music (?) of a concertina. Next to our hotel was another which boasted a most powerful gramophone. When these were all going together the youth of the place would stroll up and down playing mandolines and jews' harps!

During working hours we suffered from halted mule-teams, which fed, and jangled their bells, for an hour and more at a time in front of our windows. Possibly the worst infliction of the lot was that of a mad woman, the Madge Wildfire of the place. When all the other noises had died away—music in cafés is prohibited after eleven o'clock, or midnight on holidays—we did at last get to sleep; but only to be aroused in the small hours by the laughter or monotonous voice of this poor creature. This was beyond a joke. I and many others complained bitterly to the local authorities.

But what could be done? In this impossible island there is no lunatic asylum. By arrangement, the Corsican insane used to be sent to France—to the Department of the Var, if I remember rightly. But as the islanders omitted to pay for their people the "Continentals" got sick of it, and refused to take any more. Mad folk were then directed to the *Asile des Viellards* at Ajaccio. But after a homicidal lunatic had nearly brained one of the Sisters in charge there that institution also demurred at receiving any more.

In the present case the nuisance was too flagrant. Red tape delayed the matter for weeks; but finally a peremptory order from the Prefecture sent the lady off to the coast, for sea-transport to France. Unfortunately she left on the very same day that we did, so we did not benefit by her removal.

Having some business in Corté on one occasion I decided, with my friend, the ex-Acting Consul, to spend the night there. The town is some little way from the railway station, and before you reach it you become aware of the stenches for which it is notorious. Even the natives complain bitterly, in the public press and elsewhere, of these; but, of course, nothing is done. Possibly for this reason the best hotel is to be found at the station; but it

was full, as usual, and we went to one in the town. This had just been entirely redecorated; it was therefore very clean, and, but for the abominable smell of paint and size, tolerable enough.

Corté consists, roughly, of one long street, which begins in a *place* at one end, and ends at another, where the Marshal's statue stands. Almost opposite this is his villa, buried in fine trees.

The citadel is quaint and picturesque, but it is closed to visitors. About this time it was used as the place of confinement of some Syrian state prisoners.

Corté has a decent climate, rarely either too hot or too cold; but there is practically nothing to do there. The river would hold trout were it not relentlessly poached.

Our business completed we went back to the station, where I saw my friend off on an east-bound train. Then I proceeded to discuss an excellent lunch. A Frenchman there, almost with tears in his eyes, vowed it was the first decent meal he had had in Corsica.

The proprietress informed us that, being tired of turning away applicants for rooms on account of the limited accommodation at the station, she had rented the Marshal's Villa, and was going to open

it before winter as a first-class hotel. It should be a distinct addition to the attractions of the old capital.

There had been no rain for months. The grapes were all shrivelling up on the vines, and the dust was unbearable. Also it was very hot, even up here. The last of the snow on the Vivario side of Monte Rotondo was rapidly disappearing. Worst of all—I am afraid this is a terribly egotistical chapter—my health was not improving. Finally we decided on moving to a health-resort in the Duchy of Lichtenstein, rather higher than any mountain in England, and leaving Vivario one hot morning we travelled down, through the usual forest-fires, to the coast; embarked at Bastia on an Italian steamer, bound for Genoa; and travelling by easy stages reached our destination six days later. As autumn approached we came down lower; and finally we travelled on to Antwerp, to cross to Harwich, where poor "Dido" had to commence her "six months without hard labour"; and thence to London. I had been away just on four years.

# APPENDIX

I have had something to say (in Chapter V) of Corsican pedigrees and heraldry. It is therefore with pleasure that I reproduce a letter which has reached me since this book was finished. It is in reply to one that I wrote asking for some information as to Napoleon's Marshal, whose statue stands in Corté. Incidentally we have some interesting information as to the family of "*Madame Mère.*"

VEZZANI, CORSE,

*le* 1 *Mars*, 1923.

CHER MONSIEUR,

Ce m'est un grand plaisir de vous donner l'histoire de mon grand'oncle le Général Arrighi de Casanova, Duc de Padoue.

La famille Arrighi est originaire de la Corse. A dater du commencement du quatorzième siècle, il est facile d'en suivre éxactement la filiation jusqu' à nos jours.

Un précis généalogique conservé dans cette famille la fait déscendre de l'une des branches des Colonna, par Ristoruccio d'Omessa, vivant vers l'année 1300, et qui épouse une Pamfili. Nous trouvons ensuite en remontant l'arbre généalogique: Verdone, marié à une

Doria; Giovanninello, marié à une Savelli; Ambroggio, marié à une Gentili, veuf et Evêque d'Aléria en 1412, mort à Omessa en 1464; Arrigo, marié à une Leca: Constantino, Capitaine, marié à une Colonna; Viviano d'Omessa, capitaine, marié à une Boërio, reconnu en 1548 par Spinola, Gouverneur général de la Corse, comme étant un des principaux Gentilshommes de l'ile; Mariano Arrighi, marié à une d'Alberti, d'une des familles des Caporali,[1] en 1582. A partir de Mariano Arrighi se presentent dans l'ordre suivant: Antoine, capitaine en 1635, marié à une Casanova, et qui ajoute à son patronymique d'Arrighi celui de Casanova; Paul François, capitaine, 1686; Antoine Baptiste, 1721; Jean Thomas, Conseiller d'État sous le Gouvernement national, en 1785, marié à une Biadelli; Hyacinthe, Préfet et Baron de l'Empire marié à une Benielli; enfin, Jean Thomas Arrighi de

[1] Les familles Corses, dites des Caporali, formaient jadis dans l'île une classe fière et puissant equi ne voulait ni de l'égalité pour elle, ni de l'oppression étrangère pour son pays, mais qui longtemps à éxercé rudement le pouvoir dans les communes en de decà des monts, c'était une sorte de Féodalité qui n'entendait pas abdiquer les pretendus droits qu'elle s'était arrogés et qui disait avec orgueil: "Notre souveraineté s'étend partout où nous avons pu tracer un cercle avec l'épée."

Son origine était celle-ci: Vers le quinzième siècle les habitants de l'île, voulant s'affranchir du déspotisme d'une foule de petits tyrans feodaux parvenus à se rendre maîtres du pays, se réunirent en ensemblée générale et décidèrent de confier le défense de leurs droits à quatorze familles, qu'on nomme les Caporali, parce qu'elles furent en quelque sorte placées à la tête de la nation corse petit à petit ces familles se substituèrent aux anciens oppresseurs et s'imposerent elles-mêmes durement au pays.

Casanova, Duc de Padoue, marié à une Montesquiou-Fezensac, en 1812, dont le fils Sénateur et Ancien ministre de l'Empereur Napoleon III, est aujourd'hui en possession du titre de Duc.

Le père du Duc de Padoue, né à Corté en 1748, épouse en 1774 (12 Septembre), Antoinette Bénielli, et en eu quatre enfants:

1°—Ambroise Arrighi, tué sur le champ de bataille en Portugal mort sans postérité;
2°—Antoine-François André, mort à Saint-Domingue, aide de camp du Général Leclerc, également sans laisser de postérité;
3°—Marianne-Isabelle-Célèste, morte à trois ans;
4°—Jean-Thomas, né à Corté le 8 Mars 1778, mort à Paris le 22 Mars 1853, Général de division, Sénateur, Grand Croix et Gouverneur des Invalides.

Le grand'père du Duc de Padoue, Jean-Thomas Arrighi, Conseiller d'État sous le Gouvernement National, reconnu noble en 1785, marié à Marie Biadelli, eut sept enfants:

1°—Hyacinthe, Préfet et Baron de l'Empire, etc.;
2°—Antoine-Baptiste, Podestat en Corse et non marié;
3°—Antoine-Louis, Evêque d'Acqui, Baron de l'Empire, mort en 1819;
4°—Joseph-Philippe, Chanoine de Pise de Florence et d'Ajaccio, Vicaire Général de l'île d'Elbe en 1814, mort en 1835;

5°—Jean-Baptiste dit Famoso, marié à une Sisco;[1]
6°—Marie-Catherine, marié à Jean-Thomas Boërio,
Premier Président à la Cour Impériale de Corse;
7°—Marie-Madeleine, marié à Joseph-Marie Mariani.

Voici maintenant comment se trouve établie la parenté des familles Arrighi et Bonaparte.

Hyacinthe Arrighi, Préfet du Liamone, plus-tard de la Corse, Baron de l'Empire, Officier de la légion d'Honneur, père du Général Duc de Padoue, avait épousé en 1774 Antoinette Bénielli, fille de Bénielli d'Ajaccio et de Marianne Pietra-Santa.

Or, la sœur, de cette Marianne Pietra-Santa, tante du Duc de Padoue, avait été mariée en premières noces à Jean-Jérôme Ramolino, et en secondes nocesau Capitaine Fesch.

Du premier lit elle avait eu Maria-Lœtitia Ramolino, femme de Charles Bonaparte et mère de Napoleon Ier.

Du second lit, Joseph Fesch, Cardinal, grand Aumônier, etc., et oncle de l'Empereur.

Ainsi, la mère de Bonaparte etait la cousine germaine de la mère des Arrighi.

Les Bonaparte et le Général Duc de Padoue se trouvaient donc être cousins issus de germain.

[1] Mon grand'père, Frédéric Grazietti, Docteur à marié Marie-Lucie Arrighi de Casanova la petite fille de Jean-Baptiste Arrighi dit Famoso, oncle germain du général Arrighi Duc de Padoue. Frédéric Grazietti, déscendant d'une famille des Caporali, était le fils de Pierre-Louis Grazietti, médecin-major aux Armées de Napoleon Ier en Italie, et son fils Gustave Grazietti était médecin-major attaché à la Cour Impériale de Napoléon III.

Si vous avez encore besoin d'autres détails sur la famille Arrighi, je suis à votre disposition, et croyez que ce sera avec un très grand plaisir que je vous les donnerai.

Veuillez agréer, cher Monsieur, mes meilleures salutations.

COMTESSE PENBERTHY ROBERTS.

*Translation*

VEZZANI,
CORSICA,
*1st March*, 1923

DEAR SIR,

It is a great pleasure to me to give you the history of my great-uncle, General Arrighi de Casanova, Duke of Padua.

The Arrighi family was indigenous in Corsica. It is easy to follow exactly their pedigree from the commencement of the fourteenth century down to the present day.

A genealogical summary, in the possession of the family, gives its descent from one of the branches of the Colonna house, through Ristoruccio of Omessa, living *circa* 1300, and who married a daughter of the Pamfili. From this we find, by following the family tree—Verdone, married to a Doria—Giovanninello married to a Savelli—Ambroggio, married to a Gentili—widower and Bishop of Aléria in 1412, and who died at Omessa in 1464—Arrigo, married to a Leca—Constantino, a captain, married to a Boerio, and

acknowledged by Spinola, Governor General of Corsica, as one of the principal nobles of the island—Mariano Arrighi, married to a d'Alberti, and belonging to one of the families of Caporali[1] in 1582. After Mariano Arrighi the names run in this order: Antoine, a captain in 1635 married to Casanova and who took her name in addition to his own, Paul François a captain 1686—Antoine Baptiste 1721—Jean Thomas, Councillor of State under the National Government in 1783, married to a Biadelli—Hyacinth, Prefect and a Baron of the Empire, married to a Bénielli—and finally, Thomas Arrighi de Casanova, Duke of Padua, married to a Montesquiou-Fézensac in 1812; and whose son, a Senator and a former Minister under the Emperor Napoleon III, is the present Duke.

The father of the first Duke of Padua, who was born at Corté in 1748, married on the 12th of September, 1774, Antoinette Bénielli, and by her had four children:

[1] The Corsican families who were called the *Caporali*, at one time formed a proud and powerful class in the island, desirous neither of equality for themselves, nor of foreign domination for their country, but which had sway for many years at the back of the mountains. They were a kind of feudal chiefs who refused to abdicate the so-called rights they had seized; and who proudly said: "Our sovereignty extends everywhere where we can trace a circle with our swords."

Their origin was as follows: About the year 1400 the inhabitants of the island, desirous of freeing themselves from the disposition of a host of petty tyrants, feudal chiefs who had succeeded in making themselves masters of the country, met in general assembly and decided to entrust the defence of their rights to fourteen families, whom they named the *Caporali* as being in some sort placed at the head of the Corsican nation. Little by little these families stepped into the places of the old oppressors; and themselves forcibly governed the country.

(1) Ambroise Arrighi; killed in action in Portugal. He left no family.

(2) Antoine François André, died at St Domingo as aide-de-camp of General Leclerc. He also left no family.

(3) Marianne-Isabelle-Celeste, died at the age of three.

(4) Jean-Thomas, born at Corté on the 8th of March, 1778, died at Paris on the 22nd March, 1853, a General of Division, a Senator Grand Cross of the Legion, and Governor of the Invalides.

The grandfather of the first Duke of Padua, Jean-Thomas Arrighi (his nobility was admitted in 1785) had seven children:

(1) Hyacinth (as above).

(2) Antoine-Baptiste, a Podesta in Corsica; and a bachelor.

(3) Antoine-Louis, Bishop of Acqui and a Baron of the Empire, died 1819.

(4) Joseph-Philippe, Canon of Pisa, of Florence, and of Ajaccio, Vicar General of the Island of Elba in 1814, died in 1835.

(5) Jean Baptiste, nicknamed *Famoso*, married to a Sisco.[1]

[1] My grandfather, Frédéric Grazietti, a doctor, married Marie-Lucie Arrighi de Casanova, granddaughter of this marriage and consequently a first cousin of the Duke. Frédéric Grazietti, who was descended from a *Caporali* family, was the son of Pierre-Louis Grazietti, Surgeon-Major with the "Army of Italy"; and his son was Surgeon-Major attached to the Imperial Court of Napoleon III.

(6) Marie-Catherine, married Jean-Thomas Boërio, First President of the Imperial Court of Corsica.

(7) Marie-Madeleine, married Joseph-Marie Mariani.

This is the connection between the Arrighi and Bonaparte families:

Hyacinth Arrighi, Prefect of the Department of the Liamone, and later on of all Corsica, Baron of the Empire, Officer of the Legion of Honour, and father of the first Duke of Padua, married in 1774 Antoinette Benielli, a daughter of Benielli of Ajaccio and of Marianne Pietra-Santa.

The sister of the latter had married firstly Jean-Jérôme Ramolino, and secondly Captain Fesch. By her first husband she had Marie-Lœtitia Ramolino, wife of Charles Bonaparte, and mother of Napoleon the First.

By her second husband she had Joseph Fesch, Cardinal and Grand Almoner of France, the Emperor's uncle.

Thus "*Madame Mere*" was cousin-german to the mother of the Arrighis.

The Bonapartes and the Duke of Padua were thus also distant cousins.

If you should require any further details as to the Arrighi family, I am at your disposal, and believe me it will be with very great pleasure that I shall give them to you.

Pray accept, dear sir, my best salutations.

COMTESSE PENBERTHY-ROBERTS.

I profess that to me these relics of a distant past have great interest; but when the writer refers to the Middle Ages, one cannot but compare the Corsica that then was, and of which hardly a mouldering wall remains, and the Corsica of to-day, as I have attempted to describe it in these pages.

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